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and the Lamentations

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HALF-HOURS WITH THE MINOR PROPHETS
AND THE LAMENTATIONS.

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HALF-HOURS
WITH
THE MINOR PROPHETS
AND
THE LAMENTATIONS

BY

J. P. WILES, M.A.

(of Devizes)

Formerly Foundation Scholar of Trinity College, Cambridge

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PREFATORY NOTE

BY

H. C. G. MOULE, D.D.,

BISHOP OF DURHAM.

I welcome with great pleasure and with hopes of a large usefulness, "HALF-HOURS WITH THE MINOR PROPHETS AND THE LAMENTATIONS." The writer is my most honoured friend, and I have long known the faith, reverence, insight, and thoroughness of his study and exposition of the Word of God, which to him is indeed the Oracle of truth and life.

His present work, combining explanatory matter at intervals with a paraphrase of the text, delights me both in plan and execution. The method of paraphrase has long seemed to me singularly useful in Bible study.

The Lord of the Word greatly bless and greatly use his servant's work.

HANDLEY DUNELM.

October 27th, 1908.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Introduction	1
First Half-Hour: Hosea i. 1—ii. 1	4
Second Half-Hour: Hosea ii. 2—iii. 5	8
Third Half-Hour: Hosea iv. 1—vi. 3	13
Fourth Half-Hour: Hosea vi. 4—viii. 14	18
Fifth Half-Hour: Hosea ix. 1—xi. 11	23
Sixth Half-Hour: Hosea xi. 12—xiv. 9	30
Seventh Half-Hour: Joel i. 1—ii. 17	35
Eighth Half-Hour: Joel ii. 18—iii. 21	41
Ninth Half-Hour: Amos i., ii.	46
Tenth Half-Hour: Amos iii., iv.	52
Eleventh Half-Hour: Amos v., vi.	57
Twelfth Half-Hour: Amos vii.	62
Thirteenth Half-Hour: Amos viii., ix.	66
Fourteenth Half-Hour: Obadiah	71
Fifteenth Half-Hour: Jonah	76
Sixteenth Half-Hour: Micah i., ii.	80
Seventeenth Half-Hour: Micah iii., iv., v.	85
Eighteenth Half-Hour: Micah vi., vii.	91
Nineteenth Half-Hour: Nahum	97
Twentieth Half-Hour: Habakkuk i., ii.	103
Twenty-first Half-Hour: Habakkuk iii.	109
Twenty-second Half-Hour: Zephaniah	113
Twenty-third Half-Hour: The Lamentations of Jeremiah	121
Twenty-fourth Half-Hour: Haggai	138
Twenty-fifth Half-Hour: Zechariah i., ii.	144
Twenty-sixth Half-Hour: Zechariah iii. 1—vi. 8	150
Twenty-seventh Half-Hour: Zechariah vi. 9—viii. 23	157
Twenty-eighth Half-Hour: Zechariah ix., x., xi.	163
Twenty-ninth Half-Hour: Zechariah xii., xiii., xiv.	172
Thirtieth Half-Hour: Malachi	181

Half-Hours with the Prophets.

INTRODUCTION.

PROPHECY is not merely the prediction of things which shall be hereafter. The prophets of God did, it is true, often foretell future events ; but it is a mistake to think that this was their only, or even their principal work. They were anointed with the Holy Spirit that they might instruct men in the knowledge of God, and reveal his will. For instance, Isaiah (ch. lviii.) was commissioned to lift up his voice like a trumpet to show God's people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins ; and Micah (ch. vi.) was commanded to stand before the mountains of Judæa, which had seen God's dealings with the people all along the ages, and to plead in the presence of these dumb witnesses the Lord's controversy with his people. Thus the prophets were charged with a message to the men of their own time ; and, unless we understand the true and primary meaning of that message, we may make serious mistakes in the spiritual interpretation of their writings.

It may be thought that prophecy is necessarily an obscure and difficult subject ; and that, as other parts of God's Word are much simpler and have a more direct bearing on our daily life, we may as well leave the study of the prophetic writings to commentators and theologians. It is true that some prophecies cannot be understood without a wide and deep acquaintance with the history of the world : this is the case, for instance, with certain parts of Ezekiel and Daniel. Yet we must remember that man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God ; that the Scriptures were written for our instruction in these latter days quite as much as for the admonition of bygone

generations; and that the blessing of God is upon him that readeth and them that hear and keep the words of that prophecy which is perhaps the most difficult of all (Rev. i. 3).

It is well moreover to remember that, when first the gospel was preached to the Gentiles by the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the one text-book used was that which we somewhat inaccurately call the Old Testament. To quote the words of the chiefest of the apostles, the mystery which had been kept secret since the world began was then made manifest, and *by the scriptures of the prophets*, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith (Rom. xvi. 25, 26). Thus the writings of the prophets and the gospel of our salvation stand or fall together: let us rather say that they stand together; for though heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle of the Holy Scriptures shall never fail.

Our day is in many respects an evil day; and amid the spreading rejection of the inspiration and authority of God's Word, we cannot know too much of what he spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets. But there is an abuse of the study of prophecy which should be carefully avoided by all who fear God. It is the endeavour to make ourselves prophets by the study of the prophets. They did not prophesy to enable us to do so; and when men have tried thus to lift the veil of the future before the time, the course of events has again and again shown the uselessness of the attempt. It has been our aim in these Half-Hours to throw light on that which may be made plain, and indeed has been made plain, by other parts of Scripture and by evident fulfilment: we have sought to avoid all irreverent prying into things that are purposely sealed, it may be, till the time of the end (Dan. xii. 9).

By far the greater part of this little book has already appeared in the pages of the "Sower," a monthly magazine edited by a beloved friend of the author; hence the use of the convenient "editorial we," which, on the whole, I think best to leave unaltered. As each article was written after much anxious study and earnest prayer, extending over two years and a half, it has not been necessary to make many changes or additions. It will, however, be found an important and useful improvement that the words of the prophets and the explanatory paraphrase are here printed in

parallel columns. This book also contains a new metrical version of the Lamentations of Jeremiah, an attempt to show to English readers the peculiar and interesting structure of the Hebrew original.

I have written not for the learned few but for the Bible-loving many : yet, having had the advantage of the kind and scholarly criticism of my friend the Bishop of Durham, and of the Rev. R. Sinker, D.D., Librarian of Trinity College, Cambridge, I venture to hope that the interpretations of difficult passages given in the following pages will bear the light of investigation.

Reader, pray and read. Reader, read and pray.

FIRST HALF-HOUR.

HOSEA i. 1—ii. 1.

HOSEA tells us that the word of God came to him, in the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and that it began to come to him before the death of Jeroboam the son of Joash (Jeroboam II.), king of Israel. The other kings of Israel during this period were Zachariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea, four of whom were murdered by usurpers. Under Hoshea, the last king of Israel, the ten tribes were carried into captivity by the king of Assyria, in the sixth year of the reign of good Hezekiah, king of Judah. Hosea might well say, "They are all hot as an oven (in their lust for murder), and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen" (Hosea vii. 7).

It is clear that this prophet's ministry was a long one. It may have lasted seventy years, and at the lowest computation must have lasted nearly forty years. He certainly entered heaven by the beaten track, through much tribulation; for the scene of his labours was the kingdom of the ten tribes, the land that devoured its judges. Let us look a little more closely at this period of Israel's history, that we may the better understand the prophecy before us.

Jeroboam II., the great-grandson of Jehu, was the most prosperous and powerful king that ever ruled over the ten tribes, or, to use a convenient phrase, that ever reigned over the Northern Kingdom. He triumphed over Israel's enemies round about, over Syria, and Moab, and Ammon. "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering in of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash" (2 Kings xiv. 25—27). Yet we are told that Jeroboam "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord; he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." Jeroboam's son Zachariah, after six months' reign, was

murdered by Shallum. Zachariah was the fourth of Jehu's descendants; and thus was fulfilled the promise recorded in 2 Kings x. 30: "Thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel." A month afterwards Shallum in his turn was murdered by Menahem. From Menahem the kingdom passed on to his son Pekahiah, who was murdered by Pekah; Pekah by Hoshea. Finally, in the expressive language of the prophet, Hoshea was "cut off as the foam from the water" by the Assyrian invader. "For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. And the children of Israel did secretly those things which were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchman to the fenced city. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: and there they burnt incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger: for they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear; but hardened their necks like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he had made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divinations and enchantments, and sold

themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger" (2 Kings xvii. 7—17). Such were the times when Hosea spoke in God's name to the Northern Kingdom. Look at the dark picture, reader; study it well: and then let us pass on to consider the writings of the prophet.

The first three chapters of Hosea form a distinct prophecy, which was uttered while the land was still under the strong and prosperous rule of Jeroboam the son of Joash. Accordingly in these chapters the reproofs of the prophet are directed rather against idolatry and the worship of Baal than against open violence and bloodshed. There is a marked change at the beginning of the fourth chapter, where we read of false swearing, killing, stealing, violence, and wholesale bloodshed. This difference agrees remarkably with the history of the times as sketched above. But let us confine ourselves at present to the first twelve verses of the book, observing that the first verse of the second chapter should be joined on to chapter i. Perhaps the simplest method of explanation will be to give the substance of the prophecy in other words, with a short comment in brackets where it seems to be required.

HOSEA i. 1—ii. 1.

¹The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

²The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, *departing* from the Lord.

³So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; which conceived, and bare him a son.

⁴And the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little *while*, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel.

⁵And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.

PARAPHRASE.

The word which the Lord spake by Hosea the prophet, the son of Beeri, in the days when Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah reigned in Judah, and Jeroboam the Second reigned in Israel.

When the Lord began to reveal his word to me [as he had done long before to Samuel, 1 Sam. iii. 7], he said, Marry a wife: she will be faithless to you, and the reproach of her disgraceful conduct will attach to the children. This will be a true picture of the departure of the nation from me, its divine husband. I obeyed, and a son was born to me. Call him Jezreel, said the Lord; for my children are unto me as Jezreel, where Nadab and my prophets were murdered by Ahab and Jezebel. The house of Jehu have walked in the same evil ways, and in a few short years I will cut them off in just judgment; and then, fifty years later

⁶ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter. And *God* said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. ⁷ But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the Lord their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

⁸ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived, and bare a son. ⁹ Then said *God*, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye *are* not my people, and I will not be your *God*. ¹⁰ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, *that* in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are* not my people, *there* it shall be said unto them, *Ye are* the sons of the living God. ¹¹ Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall be* the day of Jezreel. ¹ Say ye unto your brethren, Ammi; and to your sisters, Ruhamah.

still, Assyria shall carry Israel into captivity, after overthrowing their forces completely in the valley of Jezreel.

My next child was a daughter. Call her No-mercy, said the Lord; for I will no longer have mercy on Israel; I will cause the whole kingdom to be carried into captivity: but I will have mercy on Judah, and will save them by a miraculous deliverance. [Mine angel shall slay in one night 185,000 men in Sennacherib's camp.]

A third child, a son, was born to me when my wife had weaned No-mercy; and the Lord said: Call him Not-my-people; for the children of Israel are not now my people, and I will not be their God. And yet [my promise to Abraham shall stand; in the latter days, when my Son shall take flesh and his gospel shall go forth,] the true children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, and shall be called the sons of the living God. Judah and Israel shall no longer be two contending kingdoms. They shall have one king, the Prince of Peace; they shall be gathered together in one, [and not they only, but the children of God that are scattered abroad (John ii. 52)]; they shall all return from the land of their exile. They shall then be called Jezreel, not because they are defiled with blood, but because I will plant them in their land and cause them to flourish. [Jezreel means "God will sow."] No longer shall their sons be called "Not-my-people"; their name shall be "My-People." No longer shall their daughters be called "No-mercy"; but their name shall be "Mercy."

A glance at the history of the time, as already sketched,

will show how wonderfully the above prophecy was fulfilled in the overthrow of Israel. The glorious promises contained therein received partial fulfilment in the days of the apostles; but await a fulfilment more complete in the days when God shall do as he has said in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans.

And now, reader, turn to the end of this prophecy, and consider the closing words: "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein."

SECOND HALF-HOUR.

HOSEA ii. 2—iii. 5.

OUR task in these Half-Hours is a very humble one. We do not aim at writing original discourses or eloquent sermons. We simply aim at enabling our readers to understand some of the things which "God spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." We are convinced that a correct and sober understanding of God's Word is of the utmost importance; and that much which has gone by the name of spiritualizing the Scriptures has been a carnal perversion of them, and a fruitful source of error both in doctrine and in practice.

When the Lord took the Israelitish nation by the hand to bring it out of the land of Egypt, he entered into a marriage covenant with it. (See Jer. xxxi. 32.) In this wonderful wedding Jehovah was the husband and Israel the wife. For a season the young wife was, so to speak, comparatively faithful to her high and holy husband. "Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that over-lived Joshua, and which had known all the work of the Lord, that he had done for Israel" (Josh. xxiv. 31). But "Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died; and also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the work which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served

Baalim: and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth" (Judges ii. 8—13). In the just and holy language of Scripture, so true and forcible that we shrink from reading it in our pulpits, the wife played the harlot and committed foul adultery against her heavenly husband. No language could more fitly describe the awful departure of the nation from its God: for we cannot doubt that in the midst of all this spiritual fornication, every fleshly vice was rampant in the land. We are told that the people walked in the statutes of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel; that they made their sons to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen; that they shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto devils; and finally that they did wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before them: and yet the Amorites were defiled with every shameful and evil lust that God had forbidden. (See Lev. xviii. 24, 25.)

Let the reader remember these things, and ponder once again the brief sketch of Hosea's times, given in the previous Half-Hour, and he will no longer wonder at the strong language used in Ezekiel xvi. and similar passages to set forth God's indignation at the spiritual and fleshly abominations committed by his faithless spouse.

The following simple paraphrase will, we trust, make clear the true sense of that portion of Hosea which we propose to consider in our present Half-Hour.

HOSEA ii. 2—iii. 5.

²Plead with your mother, plead: for she *is* not my wife, neither *am* I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; ³Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. ⁴And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they

PARAPHRASE.

Plead my cause, saith the Lord, against the sinful nation which is your mother. She is no longer my wife, neither am I any longer her husband. Bid her turn from her shameful idolatry; else will I strip her of all her possessions and make her as poor and destitute as in the days of her youth, when she was the slave of Pharaoh, and I will make her land a desolation, a parched wilderness where she shall

be the children of whoredoms. ⁵For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. ⁶Therefore, behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. ⁷And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then *was it* better with me than now. ⁸For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal. ⁹Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax *given* to cover her nakedness. ¹⁰And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. ¹¹I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. ¹²And I will destroy her vines and her fig trees, whereof she hath said, These *are* my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. ¹³And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burned incense to them, and she decked herself with her earrings and her jewels, and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD. ¹⁴Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. ¹⁵And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley

die of thirst; I will shew no mercy to her children, for they are "bastards and not sons." The nation has been shamefully false to her God, and has followed after idols, thinking that they are the givers of her food and clothing, oil and wine. I will therefore hedge up her way with thorns of affliction, and block up her paths with walls of difficulty, so that she shall be unable to continue the worship of her idols; yea, she shall see that they cannot deliver her, and that her heathen friends fail when help is most wanted: then shall she say, "I will return to the Lord, for it was better with me when he was my husband." She knew not that I, the living God, gave her all things richly to enjoy; even the silver and gold which I gave her in abundance she employed to make images of Baal. I will alter my dealings with her: harvest and vintage alike shall fail, wool and flax shall be withdrawn, and she shall become the naked laughing-stock of the heathen: none shall deliver her from chastisement. I will put an end to the joy of her sabbaths, her monthly festivals, and her yearly feasts. She has looked upon her vineyards and orchards as the gifts of her idol gods; therefore I will give them up to be devoured by the heathen. I will punish her for the days which she has spent in the worship of Baal Peor, Baal Berith, and other Baals, burning incense to them, honouring them, committing adultery with them, and forgetting me, saith the Lord. Yet I will never cast off my faithless spouse. When I shall have made her desolate with my just judgments, I will again draw her to myself, and speak peace and comfort to her heart. In the wilderness she shall have new vineyards, and in the valley of trouble I will set fresh

of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁶ And it shall be at that day, saith the LORD, *that* thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. ¹⁷ For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. ¹⁸ And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and *with* the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. ¹⁹ And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. ²⁰ I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD. ²¹ And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; ²² and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel. ²³ And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to *them which were* not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, *Thou art my God.*

¹ Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flags of wine. ² So I bought her to me for fifteen *pieces* of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley: ³ And I said unto her, Thou shalt

hope before her as an open door, and she shall sing again the triumph-song of Miriam and of Moses; Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously. She shall then call me her husband, not her master. [Baal means lord or master.] She has polluted the very word Master (Baal), by applying it to her idols, and she shall never use it more. In that day I will make all things work together for her good; I will destroy all enemies out of her land; and my people shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. O Israel, I will betroth thee unto me for ever in righteousness, justice, mercy, and love: I will betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know me, whom to know is life eternal. Thou shalt then be called Jezreel (God-will-sow), because I shall plant thee in the land and bless thee. Thou shalt call for corn, wine, and oil; the corn, vines, and olive-trees shall call to the earth for nourishment; the earth shall call to heaven for moisture; the heavens shall call to me for rain and dew; and I will hear and answer. I will have mercy on her that was called No-mercy, and will say, Thou art my people, to them who were called Not-my-people, and they shall say unto me, Thou art our God.

The Lord also said to me, Thou hast been a kind and loving husband ("friend") to thy wife Gomer, and yet she has committed adultery against thee; nevertheless return to her, forgive her, reinstate her: for thus have I loved the children of Israel, thus have they departed from me to serve other gods with idolatrous festivals, and thus will I reclaim them.

abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for *another* man: so *will* I also *be* for thee. ⁴For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and *without* teraphim: ⁵Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days.

So I sought out my false wife, I gave her money and bread sufficient to keep her from want for many days, and said to her, Thou shalt give up thy profligate life and be as a widow for many days; then will I take thee back to my home. Thus shall the city sit solitary that was full of people, she shall become as a widow (Lam. i. 1). For many long years she shall have no king, not even a subject prince; no sacrificial worship, no idol-worship, no priestly ephod with Urim and Thummim whereby she can enquire of the true God, no teraphim (images) with which to consult false gods. And yet in the end I the Lord will grant her repentance unto life; she shall again worship the God of her fathers (Acts xxiv. 14), and believe in him who is to fill the throne of David: they shall come with fear and trembling unto the Lord, and shall be satisfied with his mercy in the days of Messiah the Prince.

The fulfilment of this marvellous prophecy may be partially traced in the latter part of the Second Book of Kings, and in the pages of Jeremiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther: its completed realisation runs on through the troublous period between Malachi and Christ, and extends to the days of the apostles and beyond. Two thoughts strike us as we close this "Half-Hour" with God's servant Hosea.

1. Known unto God are all his works and ways from the beginning of the world. No eye but the eye of him who sees time and eternity at a glance, could have foreseen in the reign of Jeroboam the son of Joash, that Israel would thus be brought low, would remain in abject misery for many years without king or prince, and would be effectually weaned from idolatry, and at the same time shut out from comfortable intercourse with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and finally that the light of the gospel of Christ would shine forth upon them that sat in darkness, and that multitudes of them would enjoy repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound. The love of God towards the people of his choice is steadfast, unalterable, eternal. "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Know ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him?—I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. xi. 1—5). Behold therefore, reader, the goodness and severity of God!

THIRD HALF-HOUR.

HOSEA iv. 1—vi. 8.

It is recorded that God's servant Martin Luther trembled when he looked at the huge volumes which he had published to expound the Holy Scriptures. "I tremble," said he, "lest the reading of my books should keep men from reading the Scriptures themselves." The good man was right. Nothing can be a substitute for the Word of God; and if the reading of books, magazines, sermons, etc., keeps men from feeding on those words which have proceeded out of the mouth of God, it is sure to starve their souls. Reader, let these humble Half-Hours be companions to the pages of the prophets, and not substitutes for them. If you would profit by our labour, use it merely as a means to help you to understand what the prophets have spoken, and remember Hart's wise counsel—

"The sacred mine of Scripture search,
Join prayer with each inspection."

It is important to remember that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses is the work of man; and that, like many other works of man, it is not free from serious imperfections and drawbacks. It is very useful for purposes of reference, but it often obscures the meaning of the sacred

writers, and prevents us from grasping the general drift of a prophecy, an epistle, or even a history. Think for a moment how an ordinary book or a letter from a friend would suffer if cut up into small "verses." For this reason it is better to read what is called a Paragraph Bible, in which the verses are merely indicated on the margin of the page. In each of these Half-Hours we endeavour to consider some portion which seems to be complete in itself, taking two or three chapters at a time; but for the reason just given, our portions will not always begin or end with the beginning or ending of a chapter. Let not the reader think that this is a matter of caprice, or a thing of no importance. On the contrary, it costs us much thought, and if we can do it rightly, it will help to throw light on the meaning of the portions under consideration.

We have seen that the first three chapters of Hosea form a continuous and distinct prophecy, uttered in the days of Jeroboam II., whose reign over Israel coincided in part with the reign of Uzziah over Judah. Jeroboam died after a long and prosperous reign of forty-one years, and was succeeded by his son Zachariah, who "reigned over Israel in Samaria six months. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. And Shallum, the son of Jabesh, conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. This was the word of the Lord which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation" (2 Kings xv. 8—12). Shallum reigned for a month, and was murdered by Menahem. "Then Menahem smote Tiphseh, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not to him, therefore he smote it; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up."

During these awful times of confusion and violence, the word of the Lord came again to Hosea; and the character of the times is reflected in the prophet's message, which we will now endeavour to explain.

HOSEA iv. 1—vi. 3.

¹ Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the in-

PARAPHRASE.

Listen to the words which God sends to you by me, my fellow-countrymen. Thus saith the

habitants of the land, because *there is* no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

² By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. ³ Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. ⁴ Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people *are* as they that strive with the priest.

⁵ Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother. ⁶ My

people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. ⁷ As they

were increased, so they sinned against me: *therefore* will I change their glory into shame. ⁸ They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. ⁹ And there shall be, like people, like priest: and I will

punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. ¹⁰ For they shall eat, and not have

enough: they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the Lord. ¹¹ Whoredom

and wine and new wine take away the heart. ¹² My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused *them* to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God.

¹³ They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and

Lord: I am displeased with Israel; for there is no truth, nor love, nor knowledge of God in the land. Men take oaths and break them; they kill, steal, commit adultery, and break through all restraint; murder follows murder in close and quick succession. Therefore I will afflict the country and all its inhabitants; the armies of Assyria shall invade it, and sweep away flesh, fowl, and fish. But no further warning shall be given to the people, for they despise the word of God even when a faithful priest brings it to them. Therefore the false priests shall fall in the day-time, and the false prophets in the night; and I will destroy the nation that has brought them forth. It is the lack of the knowledge of God that is ruining my people; even the priests cast away my word, and I will cast them out of their office. They forget the law of their God, and I will forget them and their families. The more they prospered, the more they sinned; therefore I will lay their honour in the dust. The priests profit by the sinful ways of the people, and delight to see them do wrong; therefore priest and people alike shall suffer the punishment due to their wrong doing. Their food shall not satisfy them, and their concubines shall bring them no children; for they have cast off the fear of God. Lust and drunkenness have made them sottish: though I, the living God, have taken them to be my people, they seek counsel of stocks, and go for advice to sticks [divining rods]. Idolatry has seduced them, and they have been false to their marriage covenant with me. They sacrifice to their idols on the tops of the mountains, burn incense to them on the hills, wor-

poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof *is* good : therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. ¹⁴ I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery : for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots : therefore the people *that* doth not understand shall fall.

¹⁵ Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, *yet* let not Judah offend ; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, the Lord liveth. ¹⁶ For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer : now the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place. ¹⁷ Ephraim *is* joined to idols : let him alone. ¹⁸ Their drink is sour : they have committed whoredom continually : *herrulers with shame* do love, Give ye. ¹⁹ The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

¹ Hear ye this, O priests ; and hearken, ye house of Israel ; and give ye ear, O house of the king ; for judgment is toward you, because ye have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. ² And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I *have been* a rebuker of them all. ³ I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me : for

ship them under the pleasant shade of leafy trees ; and this worship is accompanied with all manner of licentiousness. [We learn from heathen writers that systematic fornication formed part of the worship of certain idols.] I will not check the mad lust of their daughters and young wives ; for the fathers are equally vile, and the husbands commit whoredom in honour of their idols. Their ignorance of God shall be their ruin.

Let the men of Judah take heed that they walk not in the ways of Israel ; let them not go to join in idol worship at Gilgal, let them not go to adore the golden calf at Beth-Vanity. [Jacob called it Beth-El, God's House ; but it is now become Beth-Aven, Vanity's House.] Let not those who worship idols swear by the sacred name of the Lord. [See Deut. x. 20 ; and Zeph. i. 5.] Israel is as stubborn as a heifer that kicks against the pricks : I will turn him adrift like a lamb lost in the wilderness. Ephraim cleaves to idols : I will leave him to eat the fruit of his doings. Their wine has turned sour [that is, their ways are become corrupt before me : see Isa. i. 22] ; the people are given over to lust, and the princes to dishonour : therefore the storm of my wrath shall carry them away, and their idolatry shall end in confusion.

Let the priests, the people, and the royal court listen to my words ; for I am about to pronounce judgment upon them. They have snared their brethren as a man snares birds at Mizpah, and netted them as a man nets wild beasts upon Mount Tabor. Having revolted from me, they have plunged headlong into bloodshed : but I will punish them all. I

now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, *and* Israel is defiled.

⁴ They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms *is* in the midst of them, and they have not known the Lord. ⁵ And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity: Judah also shall fall with them. ⁶ They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord; but they shall not find *him*; he hath withdrawn himself from them. ⁷ They have dealt treacherously against the Lord: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a mouth devour them with their portions.

⁸ Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, *and* the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Beth-aven, after thee, O Benjamin. ⁹ Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. ¹⁰ The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: *therefore* I will pour out my wrath upon them like water.

¹¹ Ephraim *is* oppressed *and* broken in judgment, because he willingly walked after the commandment.

¹² Therefore *will* I be unto Ephraim as a moth, and to the house of Judah as rottenness. ¹³ When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah *saw* his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.

¹⁴ For I *will* be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, *even* I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue *him*. ¹⁵ I will go *and* return to my place, till they acknow-

know the nation, and its ways are not hidden from me; it is defiled with lust and vice. They will not attempt to forsake their sin and turn to the Lord. Their heart is intoxicated with lust, and they have no knowledge of God. The proud doings of Israel testify against him; therefore he shall fall by his own iniquity, and Judah also shall suffer. In the time of their trouble they will seek the Lord with offerings of sheep and oxen; but they shall not find him: he hath hidden his face. They have been false to their covenant with God; they have married heathen wives: therefore their new-moon services shall be as a fire to consume both them and the land portioned out to their fathers.

[See! The Assyrian conqueror is marching upon Jerusalem!] Sound an alarm at Gibeah, at Ramah, and at Beth-Vanity! Let thy troops follow thee to the battle, O Benjamin! The ten tribes shall be utterly laid waste in the day of vengeance: that which I have proclaimed among them shall surely come to pass. The rulers of Judah remove landmarks to rob the people of their land: I will deluge them with my wrath. Israel is oppressed by his foes and overwhelmed by my judgments, because he has willingly followed the commandments of men rather than the commandments of God. For this reason have I blighted Israel and blasted Judah; and when they saw that they were brought low, they turned to Assyria and its king for help; but Assyria could neither help nor heal them. [See 2 Kings xv. 19; and xvi. 7.] Now, therefore, I will visit them with greater judgments. The forces of the Assyrian shall tear

ledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

¹ Come and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. ² After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. ³ Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.

them like a lion; they shall carry off spoil and captive, and there shall be none to deliver. I will hide my face from them till they acknowledge their sin and seek me. In the time of their trouble they will seek me earnestly, [and I will not finally forsake them. They shall say:—]

Come, and let us return unto the Lord: he hath wounded us, and he will heal us; he hath smitten us, and he will bind us up. After two short days he will revive us, and on the third day he will bring us as dry bones out of our graves, that we may live before him. Then shall we know him; then will we seek to grow in the knowledge of our God. The return of his favour is as certain as the rising of to-morrow's sun; and the showers of his grace are as sure and as precious as the rain which he sends in due season upon the earth.

“Backsliding souls, return to God;
Your faithful God is gracious still:
Leave the false ways ye long have trod,
For God will your backslidings heal.”

We commend to the attention of our readers Hart's beautiful hymn beginning with the above lines. It breathes the true spirit of the prophecy by Hosea.

FOURTH HALF-HOUR.

HOSEA vi. 4—viii. 14.

If we read the Holy Bible continuously and attentively, we find that it is one long record of the wickedness of man and the goodness of God. The Lord did great things for his chosen nation: he gave them good laws, great prosperity, marvellous deliverances, miraculous tokens of his loving care;

and yet he had to say, after all this, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?" From the beginning he knew that it would be thus: hence he saith in that prophetic song which Moses was told to teach the nation: "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys (i.e., the finest) of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape. But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."

Such was the course of their history as sketched prophetically by Moses before his death. (See Deut. xxxi. 19, 20; xxxii. 9—17.) And if from time to time there were reformations and improvements, if the prophets of Baal were put to the sword and the altar of Jehovah rebuilt, if the temple and its courts were cleansed and the passover was again kept with joy and rejoicing, yet these returns to the practice of "goodness" (Hosea vi. 4) were but shallow and transitory: they quickly vanished like the light morning cloud scattered by the rising sun, or the dew that dries up before the day is hot.

Speaking, therefore, as a father whose heart is smitten by the stripes which he is compelled to lay upon a rebellious son, the Lord said by Hosea:—

HOSEA vi. 4—viii. 14.

⁴O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness

PARAPHRASE.

O Ephraim (Israel), what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your

is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. ⁵Therefore have I hewed *them* by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments *are as the light that goeth forth*. ⁶For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. ⁷But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. ⁸Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity, *and is polluted with blood*. ⁹And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness. ¹⁰I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. ¹¹Also, O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

¹ When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, *and the troop of robbers spoileth without*. ² And they consider not in their hearts *that I remember all their wickedness*: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. ³ They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies. ⁴ They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, *who ceaseth from raising after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened*. ⁵ In the day of our king the princes have made *him* sick with

.godliness is as a morning cloud, as the dew that goeth early away. Your own hypocrisy has brought upon you the cutting denunciations of my prophets—thunders of death and lightning flashes of judgment. Not formal worship, but practical godliness is acceptable with me: for the fear of God is more to me than the fat of lambs. But as Adam transgressed my law in Eden, so have ye transgressed the covenant which I made with your fathers: ye have dealt treacherously with me in the land which I have given you. Even the cities of refuge and the dwellings of Levi are abodes of evil-doers. Ramoth-Gilead is stained with bloodshed; and the priests who live at Shechem [see the marginal note to Hosea vi. 9] lie in wait outside their city like troops of robbers, and murder the passers-by with wanton wickedness. Mine eye hath seen the dreadful doings of both kingdoms: Israel is defiled with fleshly lusts, and Judah also. But the reaping time is at hand! [Compare Jer. li. 33.]

When I turned the captivity of my people, [these words seem to belong to the following chapter,] when I would have healed Israel, when I pitied them and saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash (2 Kings xiv. 26, 27), then the iniquity of the land came before me, and I found its capital and court full of wickedness, the home of treason, theft, and highway robbery. They said in their hearts, The Lord seeth us not; but your transgressions are wreathed about your necks (Lam. i. 14), and are marked before me. The king and his court are entertained with wickedness, deceit, and adultery. Evil passions burn in their

bottles of wine; he stretched out his hand with scorn. ⁶For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lie in wait: their baker sleepeth all the night; in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. ⁷They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen: *there is none among them that calleth unto me.* ⁸Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned. ⁹Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth *it* not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. ¹⁰And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him for all this. ¹¹Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. ¹²When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven; I will chastise them, as their congregation hath heard. ¹³Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against me. ¹⁴And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, *and* they rebel against me. ¹⁵Though I have bound *and* strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. ¹⁶They return, *but* not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this *shall be* their derision in the land of Egypt.

hearts as the fuel smoulders in the baker's oven while the bread is rising. When a feast is held at court, king and princes drink themselves drunk and sit in the seat of the scornful. [Compare 1 Kings xvi. 9, 10.] They form a conspiracy, and the thought of murder burns in their heart like a fire which, while the baker sleeps, smoulders all night in the oven, and bursts into flame in the morning. They are hot with lust to kill: they slay their judges, they assassinate their kings: not one of them seeks unto me for help. Ephraim hath mingled with the heathen and learned their works; he is as a cake that is spoiled, as salt that has lost its savour. Syria and Assyria consume his strength, but he sees not why [see 2 Kings xiii. 3, 7; xv. 19, 20]; the land is full of symptoms of approaching ruin, but he heeds them not. His own pride testifies against him; but nothing moves him to forsake his evil ways and seek the Lord. He is like a stupid bird without understanding, which flies from one snare to rush into another; they seek help first from Egypt and then from Assyria: but whithersoever they fly, my net shall take them and bring them to the ground. I will punish them according to the words of the song which Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel (Deut. xxxi. 30). Woe unto them, for they have fled from me: destruction unto them, for they have transgressed against me. I redeemed them from Egypt, yet they have spoken lies against me. Instead of the voice of prayer, I hear the voice of blasphemy: they meet together to eat and drink, and bid me defiance. I have cared for them,

¹ *Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law.* ² Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. ³ Israel hath cast off *the thing that is good*: the enemy shall pursue him. ⁴ They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew *it* not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. ⁵ Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast *thee* off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long *will it be* ere they attain to innocency? ⁶ For from Israel *was* it also: the workman made it: therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. ⁷ For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up. ⁸ Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein *is* no pleasure. ⁹ For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers. ¹⁰ Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes. ¹¹ Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. ¹² I have written to him the great things of my law, *but* they were counted as a strange thing. ¹³ They sacrifice flesh *for* the sacri-

and made them strong, and they requite me with mischief. Their very reformatations are unreal and miss the mark. Their princes shall die for their blasphemy, and shall be a derision in the land of their captivity.

Lift up thy voice like a trumpet! Swift and cruel as the eagle, the Assyrian cometh against the people among whom I have dwelt, saith the Lord; for they have transgressed my covenant and broken my laws. Then will they cry unto me, "Save us, O God, for we know thee; we are thine Israel." But Israel hath cast off that which is good; therefore the enemy shall overtake him. They have rejected me for kings of their own making; they have set up princes without my sanction. They have used their silver and gold to make idols that are doomed to destruction. Samaria's golden calf is its ruin, for it hath kindled mine anger: how long will they cleave to their idolatry? Israel has even made its own god, the work of the workman and no god: it shall be dashed to pieces. They sow vanity; they shall reap destruction. They shall have no standing corn; or what little grows shall yield no meal; or if it yield it shall be eaten by strangers. Israel shall be consumed, and shall lie as a potsherd among the nations. Like a wild ass, solitary and untamable, they go to Assyria for help, and pay their heathen paramours to love them; their hire shall be thrown away. [Compare 2 Chron. xxviii. 20, 21.] I will gather the nation's lovers together to destroy it, and it shall soon have to carry the burden of him who saith, "Are not my princes as kings?" (Isa. x. 8.) Against my command Ephraim

fices of mine offerings, and eat it; *but* the Lord accepteth them not; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt. ¹⁴For Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

has multiplied altars; and his altars multiply his sins. Many good laws have I written for my people, many messages have I sent; but they make light of them. The sacrifices which they seem to offer to me are but feasting on fed beasts: they are not accepted. I will remember their iniquity, I will visit their sins: they shall return to Egyptian bondage. Both Israel and Judah have forgotten their Maker; they build palaces and trust in the strong cities with which they fill the land: but I will send a fire into their cities which shall devour the castles thereof.

Against city after city and nation after nation was this last threat repeated by God's servant Amos with terrible sevenfold iteration. The fate of Damascus, of Gaza, of Tyre, of Bozrah, of Rabbah, of Kiriath, and of Jerusalem, proves that the God of judgment fulfils his threats as certainly as the God of grace fulfils the promises of his love.

FIFTH HALF-HOUR.

HOSEA ix. 1—xi. 11.

THE ninth chapter of Hosea seems to form a distinct prophecy uttered on the occasion of some harvest-home, when the land was full of idolatrous festivity. The infatuated people regarded the heaps of golden grain which filled the corn-floors as the gifts of their idol-gods. They said of the produce of the cornfields and vineyards, "These are my rewards that my lovers have given me;" and thus they rendered their corn and wine as unclean as a harlot's hire in the eyes of their holy Husband. (Compare Hosea ii. 5, ii. 12, and ix. 1.)

Two or three expressions in this chapter present difficulties which we shall endeavour to remove by the following preliminary remarks:—

1. *The bread of mourners* (verse 4). Death was reckoned a polluted and polluting thing. We read in Num. xix., "He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. . . . Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel. . . . This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days." Hence the "bread of mourners," eaten at a funeral, was polluted bread.

2. "For their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord" (verse 4). Comparing this with Deut. xii. 15, we see that "their bread for their soul" means the food for which they have a desire; in fact, their daily bread; and the Lord here tells them that he will not accept any portion of it as an offering to himself, and that their very meat-offerings (or meal-offerings, to translate more correctly) should not be accepted on his altar. For the law of the meal-offering see Lev. ii.

3. "*The days of Gibeah*" are the days whose dreadful record is found in Judges xix., xx., xxi. Through the sin of "the children of iniquity" in Gibeah (Hos. x. 9), thousands of the people fell in battle, and the tribe of Benjamin was almost blotted out. And yet this fearful lesson was, so to speak, wasted on a nation of obstinate transgressors. Hence the prophet cries, "They have deeply corrupted themselves as in the days of Gibeah;" "O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah."

Now let us try to understand the chapter with the help of the following paraphrase:—

HOSEA ix. 1—xi. 11.

¹ Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as *other* people: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every cornfloor. ² The floor and the winepress shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. ³ They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean *things* in Assyria. ⁴ They shall not offer wine *offerings* to the Lord, neither shall they be

PARAPHRASE.

O Israel, rejoice not over thine harvest and thy vintage as other nations do; for thou hast shamefully departed from thy God; thou hast accepted even thy crops as hire given to thee by thy idol-paramours. Therefore the corn and the wine shall not profit thee, and the vintage shall fail thee. Thou shalt no longer dwell in the land which I gave to thy fathers; thou shalt return to Egyptian bondage, and shalt eat unclean

pleasing unto him: their sacrifices *shall be* unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord. ⁶What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord? ⁶For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant *places* for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns *shall be* in their tabernacles. ⁷The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come; Israel shall know *it*: the prophet *is* a fool, the spiritual man *is* mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred. ⁸The watchman of Ephraim *was* with my God: *but* the prophet *is* a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. ⁹They have deeply corrupted *themselves*, as in the days of Gibeah: *therefore* he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins.

¹⁰I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: *but* they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto *that* shame; and *their* abominations were according as they loved. ¹¹As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. ¹²Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, *that there shall not be a*

food in Assyrian captivity. I will accept no drink-offerings from thy wine, nor take any pleasure therein: thy sacrifices shall be rejected as defiled, and shall pollute those who eat thereof. Thy bread shall be merely for thine hunger; no portion of it shall come into mine house as an offering to me. How will ye be able in a foreign land to keep the solemn festivals, the days of sacred joy, which I commanded by Moses? For, lo, ye will flee from the face of the invader; but in Egypt ye shall find burial, in Memphis a grave! Your rich and pleasant homes shall be nurseries for nettles, and brambles shall overgrow your desolate dwellings. The time is come for me to visit your sins with the rod, and to recompense your transgressions with stripes; and ye shall know it. Even your prophets shall be smitten with folly, and your teachers with madness; for your sins are many, and your rebellion is great. There was a time when Ephraim's watchmen walked with God; but now they lead the people into the snares of death, and teach rebellion in the temple-courts. They have made themselves the servants of corruption, as did the men of Gibeah in the days of the Judges: I will remember their iniquity, I will punish their sins.

In early days Israel was as pleasant to me as grapes in the desert, sweet as the first-ripe figs: but they soon turned aside after Baal Peor, gave themselves up to shameful fornication, and made themselves as abominable as the idols that they loved. In those early days I promised Ephraim fruitfulness; but this their glory shall vanish like a bird on the wing: birth, pregnancy, and conception shall cease. Yea, if they bring up children, I will cut them

man *left*: yea, woe also to them when I depart from them!

¹³Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, *is* planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. ¹⁴Give them, O Lord: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. ¹⁵All their wickedness *is* in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes *are* revolvers. ¹⁶Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay *even* the beloved *fruit* of their womb. ¹⁷My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

off before they grow up to manhood. Woe unto them when I depart from them!

I have planted Ephraim in a strong and pleasant land, safe as Tyre on its sea-girt rock: but Ephraim shall give up his children to the sword of the enemy, said the Lord. [Then said Hosea: "Thou art righteous: my countrymen deserve to lose their children."] Give them, O Lord—what wilt thou give them? Give them childlessness." Gilgal is filled with their wickedness: there they provoked me to anger by demanding a king (1 Sam. xi. 15 and xii. 17). And now because of the wickedness of their doings I will cast them out of the land, and my favour towards them shall cease: for all their princes have rebelled against me. I will smite them; their root shall wither; they shall bear no fruit: yea, such offspring as they have, dear though it is to them, shall be slain. My God will reject them, because they have refused to hearken to his prophets; and they shall wander like outcasts among the heathen.

Moses the man of God, shortly before his death, warned Israel that if their heart turned away from the Lord to go and serve the gods of the heathen, their sin would be "a root that beareth gall and wormwood;" and fifteen hundred years later the Hebrew Christians were exhorted to give diligent heed lest there should be any profane person among them, whose sin should be "a root of bitterness" springing up to trouble them and to defile many. Hosea in his day saw this bitter crop springing up like "hemlock" from the seeds of sin which Israel had scattered broadcast in the furrows of the field, that is, all over the land. [The Hebrew word translated "hemlock" in Hosea x. 4, is the same as that translated "gall" in Deut. xxix. 18.]

The words, "when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows" (Hosea x. 10), are difficult to understand. They may be explained, but the explanation seems forced and un-

natural. In some versions (for instance, in the Modern Greek Bible), we find another rendering, probably more correct, and certainly easier to understand: "When they shall be carried captive for their two transgressions." Does not the prophet here refer to the two golden calves? (See 1 Kings xii. 29, 30.)

The above remarks will clear the way for our exposition of Hosea's next prophecy (x. 1—xi. 11).

HOSEA x. 1—xi. 11.

¹ Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. ² Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images. ³ For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the Lord; what then should a king do to us? ⁴ They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. ⁵ The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof *that* rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. ⁶ It shall be also carried unto Assyria *for* a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. ⁷ *As for* Samaria, her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. ⁸ The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

PARAPHRASE.

Israel was like a fruitful vine, [not "empty," but "emptying," that is, yielding fruit,] bringing forth fruit abundantly: but as his fruit increased, he increased the number of his altars; and the better his harvests were, the better he made his idols. Their heart halts between two opinions (1 Kings xviii. 21), and their sin shall now find them out: their altars shall be broken down, and their idols shall be destroyed. They shall soon have to say, "We have lost our king: for we feared not the Lord; and without his blessing how could a king profit us?" Even when they make a covenant they perjure themselves, using vain words and swearing false oaths. Roots of bitterness, calling for judgment, spring up from the seeds of sin scattered broadcast over the land. The men of Samaria shall tremble for the safety of their golden calf at Beth-Vanity: its worshippers shall mourn over its destruction, and the priests who rejoiced before it shall lament because its glory is departed. The calf shall be carried into Assyria as a present to Assyria's king; and Israel shall be covered with confusion, and shall be ashamed of his evil ways. His king shall perish and pass away as the bubbles from the surface of the stream. The high places also of Vanity, which have made Israel to sin, shall be destroyed; and their altars shall be a desolation, over-

⁹O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. ¹⁰*It is in my desire that I should chastise them; and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows.*

¹¹And Ephraim *is as* an heifer *that is* taught, *and* loveth to tread out *the corn*; but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, *and* Jacob shall break his clods.

¹²Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

¹³Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men.

¹⁴Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon *her* children. ¹⁵So shall Beth-el do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

¹When Israel *was* a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. ²*As* they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images.

³I taught Ephraim also to go,

grown with thorns and thistles. Then shall they say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall upon us.

O Israel, thou hast sinned ever since the days of Gibeah; ye have persisted therein [have "stood" in the way of sinners, Ps. i. 1.] Did not the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity overtake them? [And shall ye escape?] I am resolved to punish you: the heathen shall be gathered together against you, when ye shall be carried into captivity for your two transgressions.

Ephraim has been like a well-trained heifer that loves to tread out the corn; but I will put a yoke on the heifer's fair neck, I will set a hard driver over Ephraim: Judah and Israel shall toil in slavery beneath the rod of an oppressor.

Sow righteousness, and ye shall reap lovingkindness; repent, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and refresh you with the showers of his faithful and just mercy (1 John i. 9). But ye have sown wickedness, reaped iniquity, and eaten the fruit of falsehood; because ye trusted in your own wisdom and in the might of your armies. Therefore the tumult of invasion shall fill the land, and your strong cities shall be sacked as Beth-arbel was sacked by Shalman, when in the day of battle mother and child were massacred together (2 Kings xvii. 3). This shall be the result of your wicked worship of the golden calf: at sunrise the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.

I loved thee, O Israel, in the days of thy youth (Jer. ii. 2); I called thee out of Egypt, saying unto Pharaoh, Let my son go, that he may serve me. [Such is the historic sense of Hos. xi. 1—its prophetic sense is unfolded in

taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. ⁴I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. ⁵He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. ⁶And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour *them*, because of their own counsels. ⁷And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt *him*.

⁸How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? *how* shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? *how* shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. ⁹I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I *am* God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city. ¹⁰They shall walk after the Lord: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. ¹¹They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord.

[Matt. ii. 15.] But when my servants have called thee to walk in my ways, thou hast shown thyself to be a disobedient and gainsaying nation; thou hast sacrificed unto Baals, and burned incense to graven images. I trained thee with loving care, as a mother teaches her child to walk; but thou knewest not that all thy health and prosperity came from me. I led thee as a man leads his son, binding him with ties of love: I delivered thee and fed thee even as one lifts the yoke from his ox and gives it corn. Thou shalt return to a worse Egypt than that from which I called thee; for the Assyrian shall be thy king, because thou refusest to return to me. The armies of the enemy shall smite thy cities, consume their bars, and slay their inhabitants, because of thine evil counsels. My people are ever ready to depart from me: and though I summon them to return to me, not one of them will bow to my authority.

And yet, how shall I give thee up, my son Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee to death, my child Israel? How shall I destroy thee as Sodom? How shall I consume thee as Gomorrah? My bowels are troubled for thee (Jer. xxxi. 20), and my relenting heart burns with love. I will not execute my fierce anger; I will not utterly destroy Ephraim: for I *am* God, and not man, the Holy One of Israel; I will not come up into the midst of thee and consume thee (Exod. xxxiii. 5). My banished ones shall return to me when I shall summon them as with a lion's roar: they shall hasten homeward from the islands of the west, a small remnant shall fly from Egypt as a bird let loose, others from the land of Assyria as a dove escaping from

the fowler's snare, and I will plant them again in the land that I have given them, saith the Lord.

Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; that as sin had reigned unto death, even so grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

SIXTH HALF-HOUR.

HOSEA xi. 12—xiv. 9.

IN entering on our last Half-Hour with Hosea, we wish to say a few words concerning a passage of acknowledged difficulty, which we touched very briefly in our exposition of the first chapter. If we had given a reason for every explanation of the prophet's "dark sayings" which we have set before our readers, we should have defeated our own object, which is to imitate as far as possible the inspired brevity of his prophecy. But the passage in question is so peculiarly important and difficult that it seems to demand special treatment. It is the Lord's command, "Take thee a wife of whoredoms."

When we remember that the Lord had said to Israel, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. xi. 44 and xix. 2); that he had said concerning the priests, "They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he (the priest) is holy unto his God;" and that the high priest was forbidden to marry "a widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, or a harlot" (see Lev. xxi. 1—15), it seems impossible to believe that God commanded his servant Hosea to marry a common prostitute. Among the various explanations which have been given of this great difficulty, the best and simplest seems to be that the Lord commanded the prophet to take a wife, and told him beforehand that she would prove a genuine daughter of the faithless nation to which she belonged, would break her marriage vow, and bring disgrace on her husband and family. The prophet accordingly married Gomer, the daughter of

Diblaim, met with the bitter trouble which the Lord had foretold, and was afterwards commanded to take back his false but repentant wife, in order to show forth the Lord's faithfulness to his faithless spouse, the Israelitish nation.

We must now endeavour to present our readers with an explanation of the concluding portion of Hosea's prophecy (Hos. xi. 12—xiv. 9).

HOSEA xi. 12—xiv. 9.

¹²Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints. ¹Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation; and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt. ²The Lord hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him.

⁸He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: ⁴Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him *in* Beth-el, and there he spake with us; ⁶Even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial. ⁸Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

⁷*He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he*

PARAPHRASE.

The tribe of Ephraim, the men of Israel, lie unto me with their mouth, and flatter me with their tongue; [their worship is full of hypocrisy;] but Judah yet keepeth the charge of the Lord and hath not forsaken the Holy One. (Comp. Ps. lxxviii. 36, 2 Chron. xiii. 9-11.) Ephraim feedeth on vanity, and madly pursueth his own ruin; he daily addeth lie to lie, and outrage to outrage: he maketh an alliance with Assyria, and seeketh to purchase by presents the friendship of Egypt. Also the Lord hath somewhat against Judah, and will punish both kingdoms according to their ways, and reward them according to their iniquities.

[Consider your origin, ye sons of Jacob!] Your father was singled out for divine favour even in the womb, and in his strength [i.e., when he had grown to manhood] he had power with God. Yea, he had power with the Angel of God's presence, and prevailed: with tears and prayers he sought forgiveness and blessing: he found God at Bethel, and there promises were made to him and to his seed by the mouth of the Almighty, who is known to Israel by the name Jehovah. Therefore, O Israel, turn thou unto thy God, walk before him in holiness and righteousness, and wait on thy God continually.

[Common honesty in business is perished out of the land.]

loveth to oppress. ⁸ And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: *in* all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me that *were* sin.

⁹ And I *that am* the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast.

¹⁰ I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.

¹¹ *Is there iniquity in Gilead?* surely they are vanity: they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal; yea, their altars *are* as heaps in the furrows of the fields. ¹² And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept *sheep*. ¹³ And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. ¹⁴ Ephraim provoked *him* to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him, and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

¹ When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. ² And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, *and* idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the

Ephraim is a merchant who uses deceitful balances, and loves to defraud. Yet he saith, I have prospered and acquired wealth by my own industry, and in all my transactions there is no dishonesty that could be called sin. Thou forgettest that I, the Holy One, am the Lord thy God. I brought thee up out of Egypt, and by the feast of tabernacles I remind thee that I then made the children of Israel to dwell in tents (Lev. xxiii. 43). I have also testified against you by my servants the prophets, speaking to you through their ministry at sundry times and in divers manners.

Is not Gilead vanity? Surely the people thereof are like unto their vain idols. In Gilgal also they sacrifice bullocks to them: and the altars which they have built are as numerous as heaps of flints gathered together on a stony field. [And yet they owe everything to my favour;] for Jacob was a penniless fugitive in Padan-aram, a poor shepherd with nothing but his labour to give for his wife's marriage-portion; and in after days his seed escaped from Egypt, not by force of arms, but by the power of God; and by the same power they were preserved in the wilderness. But they requite me with bitterest provocation: therefore their blood-guiltiness shall not be purged away, and their blasphemy shall return upon their own head.

When Ephraim spake with lowly fear, he was exalted above his brethren; but when he became guilty of Baal-worship, he was brought low. But in these days they sin more and more; with their silver they make molten images, idols of their own devising, the handiwork of men: they say of their golden calves, Let those

calves. ³Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff *that* is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.

⁴Yet I *am* the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for *there is* no saviour beside me. ⁵I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought.

⁶According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me.

⁷Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe *them*: ⁸I will meet them as a bear *that is* bereaved of *her whelps*, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. ⁹O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me *is* thine help. ¹⁰I will be thy king: where *is any other* that may save thee in all thy cities?

and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

¹¹I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took *him* away in my wrath.

¹²The iniquity of Ephraim *is* bound up; his sin *is* hid. ¹³The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him: he *is* an unwise son; for he should not stay long in *the place* of the breaking forth of children. ¹⁴I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.

who offer sacrifice, worship them. Therefore shall they speedily perish as the morning-cloud soon scattered, as the dew early dried up, as the chaff driven by the whirlwind from the threshing-floor, as the smoke curling upward from the chimney, and lost in the breeze.

[Ye worship these miserable idols;] and yet I am the Lord thy God that brought thee out of Egypt; thou shalt have no god but me, for there is no saviour beside me. In the great and terrible wilderness, wherein was no water, I cared for thee. I brought thee into a land of fat pastures, and thou wast filled with good things: thou wast filled, and then thine heart was lifted up with pride, and thou didst forget me. Therefore my judgments shall rend thee, as a lion rends his prey; as a leopard lurking by the way I will watch to bring evil upon thee; I will meet thee as a bear robbed of her whelps; I will rend thine heart, and devour thee like a lion: the Assyrian like a wild beast shall tear thee to pieces. O Israel, this thy destruction is thine own doing: there is no help for thee but in me. Where is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities? Where are thy judges, of whom thou saidst, Give us a king to judge us, and princes to rule over us? (1 Sam. viii. 6.) I gave thee then a king in mine anger, and I have now taken him away in my wrath. Thine iniquity is treasured up for judgment; thine iniquity is stored away to be brought forth to the light. Sorrow and anguish shall come upon thee: thou art unwise: it is true that thou shouldst give birth to repentance, but thou art as one that hath not strength to bring

¹⁵ Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east wind shall come, the wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up: he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. ¹⁶ Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

¹ O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. ² Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. ³ Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are* our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. ⁴ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. ⁵ I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. ⁶ His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. ⁷ They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

forth. [And yet thy sin shall not make my grace of none effect:] I will ransom thee from the power of the grave, I will redeem thee from death. O death, where is thy victory? O grave, where is thy sting? [I am God, and not man,] and I will never repent of my resolve to save.

But meanwhile, though Ephraim hath been more fruitful than his brethren, the Assyrian shall come as an east wind, as a hot blast sent by the Lord from the wilderness: the springs of thy prosperity shall be dried up, and the streams thereof shall cease to flow; the enemy shall carry away all the treasures of thy wealth. Samaria shall be laid waste because she hath rebelled against her God: the cruel heathen shall slay her inhabitants, murder her babes, and rip up her women with child.

[What then? Hath God cast away his people? Nay, the voice of his love still saith,] O Israel, return unto me, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Turn to the Lord with words of confession and prayer, saying unto him, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the offerings of our lips, giving thanks to thy name. We will not look to Assyria for deliverance, nor go down to Egypt for help; neither will we worship the idols which our hands have made: for thy grace alone is the refuge of the fatherless." So will I heal your backsliding, and will love you freely: for I delight in mercy, and retain not mine anger for ever. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and take root like the cedars of Lebanon. His branches shall spread; he shall be fair as the fruitful olive, and sweet as

⁸ Ephraim *shall say*, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard *him*, and observed him: I *am* like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found.

Lebanon's cedars. His children shall again dwell safely under his sway; they shall revive like corn, grow like the vine, and be fragrant as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall repent of his idolatry and turn to the Lord. I have heard his words: I have seen his ways. I will overshadow him with my grace, and make him fruitful with my blessing.

⁹ Who *is* wise, and he shall understand these *things*? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord *are* right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Whoso is wise shall understand these things; whoso is prudent shall know them: for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein.

Reader, believest thou the prophets? If not, neither wouldest thou be persuaded though one rose from the dead.

SEVENTH HALF-HOUR.

JOEL i. 1—ii. 17.

HE who sent Hosea to faithless Israel sent Joel to guilty Judah. It is not easy to say when, for Joel makes no mention of the kings under whom he lived and prophesied; but there are good reasons for supposing that he was contemporary with Hosea. We have seen that the days were evil in the northern kingdom, and we learn from Joel that the sins of Judah had brought down upon the southern kingdom the chastising hand of its God. Bare cornfields, ruined vineyards, fig-trees whose fruitless, leafless, barkless branches glittered white under the scorching sun, all told the guilty land of the anger of the Lord. The voice of his thunder was in the heavens, marshalling his "great army" of a million times a million locusts, and the sun's fiery heat devoured the pastures of the wilderness. Tiny insects, each of which could have been crushed in a moment by the hand or heel of man, came upon the wind in countless myriads, the irresistible ministers of divine vengeance. At their coming all faces

turned pale, for all knew that destruction, famine, and pestilence followed in their train. They ran upon the cities like mighty men, they climbed the walls like men of war, they fell on the sword and were not wounded, they stormed the houses, they swarmed in at the latticed windows; earth quaked before them, heaven trembled, sun and moon were darkened, and the light of the stars was quenched. The day of the Lord was indeed terrible, and none could abide it.

If to any reader this awful description should seem to mean more than a plague of locusts, we readily admit that it may foreshadow greater things, the dreadful sights and sounds of the last great day. But we have no doubt that it refers primarily to a real visitation of literal locusts inflicted on Judah in the days of Joel. It is quite in the manner of Holy Scripture thus to describe the smaller and the greater in the same words. For instance, in the twenty-fourth of Matthew it is almost impossible to say what should be referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, and what to the last judgment. But as to the very real terrors of a plague of locusts, listen to the testimony of an eye-witness in our own times. We quote from Vol. III. of "The Land and the Book," by Dr. Thomson, and similar quotations might easily be multiplied from other sources.

"The whole face of the mountain was black with them. On they came like a disciplined army. We dug trenches, and burned fires, and beat and burned to death heaps upon heaps; but the effort was utterly useless. Wave after wave rolled up the mountain side, and poured over rocks, walls, ditches and hedges, those behind covering up and bridging over the masses already killed. For four days they continued to pass on toward the east; and finally only a few stragglers of the mighty host were left behind. In every stage of their existence these locusts give a most impressive view of the power of God to punish a wicked world. Look at the pioneers of the host—those flying squadrons that appear in early spring. Watch the furious impulse for the propagation of their devouring progeny. No power of man can interrupt it. Millions upon millions, with most fatal industry, deposit their innumerable eggs in the field, the plain, and the desert. This done, they vanish like morning mist. But in six or eight weeks the very dust seems to waken into life, and,

moulded into maggots, begins to creep. Soon this animated earth becomes minute grasshoppers, and creeping and jumping, all in the same general direction, they begin their destructive march. . . . They devour every green thing, and with wonderful expedition. A large vineyard and garden adjoining mine was green as a meadow in the morning, but long before night it was naked and bare as a newly-ploughed field or a dusty road. The noise made in marching and foraging was like that of a heavy shower on a distant forest. . . . I have this dreadful picture indelibly fixed on my mind. For several nights after they came to Abeih, as soon as I closed my eyes the whole earth seemed to be creeping and jumping; nor could I banish the ugly image from my brain. . . . When the head of the mighty column came in contact with the palace of the Emir of Asaad in Abeih, they did not take the trouble to wheel round the corners, but climbed the wall like men of war, and marched over the top of it." [See Joel ii. 7.]

Such was the awful plague which lay heavy on Judah when Joel spake of repentance and forgiveness, of the outpouring of the Spirit, of the condemnation of the wicked, of the final deliverance and the eternal blessedness of the Church of God. Let us listen to his words:—

JOEL i. 1—ii. 17.

¹ The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

² Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

³ Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

⁴ That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. ⁵ Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. ⁶ For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth

PARAPHRASE.

Thus said the Lord by the mouth of his servant Joel the son of Pethuel: Hear, ye that have lived longest and seen most: hearken, ye men of Judah, all of you. Did ever ye or your fathers see such a visitation as this? Tell it to your children after you, and let it be handed on from generation to generation. Locusts that gnaw, locusts that swarm, locusts that devour, locusts that destroy, have swept over our land, and what one swarm hath left another hath eaten. Rouse yourselves, ye drunkards: weep for the wine that is no more; lament for the juice of the grape, for which henceforth ye thirst in vain. For a nation of destroyers, in numbers that cannot be numbered, is come up against us. As a lion rends

are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. ⁷He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white. ⁸Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. ⁹The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn. ¹⁰The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. ¹¹Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen; howl, O ye vinedressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. ¹²The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, *even* all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men. ¹³Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat offering and the drink offering is withholden from the house of your God. ¹⁴Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders *and* all the inhabitants of the land *into* the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord, ¹⁵Alas for the day! for the day of the Lord *is* at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. ¹⁶Is not the meat cut off before your eyes, *yea*, joy and gladness from the house of our God? ¹⁷The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. ¹⁸How do the beasts groan! the herds of cattle are perplexed, because they have no pasture;

his prey, as a lioness tears her quarry, so have they ravaged our vines, stripped the bark from our fig-trees, and left them leafless and fruitless, with branches white and dead. Lament, O land, like a virgin girt with sackcloth for the youth who did not live to wed her. No offering is left, of meal or wine, for the worshippers to bring to the temple; and the priests who minister therein mourn. The crops are destroyed, the land is in affliction: for the corn is perished, the vine is ruined, and the olive faileth. The hope of the husbandman is put to shame, and the vinedresser laments; for the harvest of wheat and barley is perished from the field, and the vine withereth in the vineyard. The pomegranate, the palm, the apple, *yea*, all the trees of the field are blasted, and joy is blighted and gone from the sons of men. Gird yourselves with sackcloth and lament, O priests; cry aloud, ye that serve the altar; come, lie all night in mourning attire, ye ministers of our God: for neither corn nor wine is left to be offered in the temple. Ordain a fast, proclaim a solemn meeting: gather the elders and all the people in the temple courts, and cry unto the Lord. Alas for the day! The day of the Lord is here, it cometh as destruction from him who is able to destroy. We see our food perish before our eyes; in our worship is left no gladness, no joy. [Drought follows in the train of the locusts, and] the seed shrivels beneath the clods. Our store-houses fall to pieces, and our barns become heaps of ruins: for the crops are gone. The beasts of the field groan, and the cattle are perplexed for want of pasture: *yea*, the flocks of sheep perish with

yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. ¹⁹ O Lord, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burned all the trees of the field. ²⁰ The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

¹ Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for *it is nigh at hand*; ² a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, *even to the years of many generations*. ³ A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land *is as the garden of Eden before them*, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.

⁴ The appearance of them *is as the appearance of horses*; and as horsemen, so shall they run.

⁵ Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array.

⁶ Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. ⁷ They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war;

and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: ⁸ neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and *when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded*. ⁹ They shall run to and fro in the city;

they shall run upon the wall, they

hunger. Unto thee, O Lord, will I cry: for the fiery sun hath consumed the pastures of the countryside, and the heat thereof hath burned up all the trees of the field. The dumb beasts cry to God for mercy, and the heat hath consumed the pastures of the countryside. Let the voice of the trumpet proclaim a fast in Zion, and sound ye an alarm in Jerusalem; let all the men of Judah tremble, for the day of God's judgment is come, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and of the shadow of death; as when the first ray of dawn on the mountain-tops reveals the deep darkness of the valleys. The Lord's great army cometh, and it is strong. Never before was such a scourge, nor shall be hereafter unto many generations. As a fire they devour all that lies before them, and behind them is as it were the track of a burning flame. Though the land in front of them be an Eden, in their rear it is a waste wilderness, and nothing escapes them. On they come like squadrons of horse, as the charger to the battle so do they run. The noise of their flight is as the rumbling of chariot-wheels upon the mountains, the sound of their devouring teeth is as the sound of fire among stubble. [So Dr. Thomson: "The noise of their foraging was like that of a heavy shower on a distant forest."] They march like a mighty host in battle array. At their coming the nations tremble, and all faces wax pale. They charge like valiant men; they scale the wall like men of war. They march right on in unbroken ranks, each walking in his own path, and when they fall upon the sword they are neither wounded nor dispersed. They rush upon the city, they run upon the wall, they climb the houses,

shall climb up upon the houses ; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. ¹⁰ The earth shall quake before them ; the heavens shall tremble : the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining : ¹¹ and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army : for his camp *is* very great : for *he* is strong that executeth his word : for the day of the Lord *is* great and very terrible ; and who can abide it ?

¹² Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye *even* to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning : ¹³ and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God : for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. ¹⁴ Who knoweth *if* he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him ; *even* a meat offering and a drink offering unto the Lord your God ?

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly : ¹⁶ gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts : let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. ¹⁷ Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them : wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God ?

they enter through the lattices like a thief. At their presence the earthquakes, the heavens tremble, sun and moon are darkened, and the stars shine not. The voice of God's thunder heralds their approach : ten thousand times ten thousand throng his camp : for he is mighty to execute judgment. The day of the Lord is great and very terrible : who can abide it ?

Yet even now, saith the Lord, turn from evil ways and seek me with all your heart, with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Rend not your garments merely, but your hearts, and turn unto the Lord your God : for he *is* gracious and merciful, slow to wrath, plenteous in lovingkindness, ready to spare the smitten sinner that seeks his face. Peradventure he will repent himself of his anger, withdraw his hand, and leave a blessing behind him, that ye may yet again have corn and wine to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord your God.

Let the voice of the trumpet proclaim a fast in Zion, and call ye a solemn meeting. Gather the people together, sanctify the congregation. Assemble all the inhabitants of the land,—elders, children, and sucklings, bride and bridegroom. Let the priests lie weeping between the altar and the temple door, and there let them cry : Spare thy people, O Lord : they are thine own inheritance ; give them not up to shame. Let them not become a by-word among the nations, nor let it be said among the heathen, Where *is* their God ?

In our next Half-Hour we shall see the power of prayer, and the riches of God's long-suffering mercy.

EIGHTH HALF-HOUR.

JOEL ii. 18—iii. 21.

JOEL's faithful message was attended with the divine blessing. The stroke of God's rod, and the voice of God's prophet, brought the foolish people to their senses; they rent their heart, and not their garments; they turned to the Lord with all their heart with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and they found the Lord gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness. He repented him of the evil; he became jealous for his land; indignant, so to speak, with the insect foes who had dared to ravage his land and ruin his people; he drove them into the wilderness, and drowned them in the waters, their vanguard in the Dead Sea and their rear in the Mediterranean, till the shores of both reeked with the ill-savour of their putrefying carcasses.

In illustration of this last fact one of the early fathers tells us that in his own time, when Judea had been invaded with locusts, he had known them to be driven by the wind into these same two seas, the shores whereof were pestilential with the stink of their decaying carcasses. Another writer says that "the winds drive the clouds of locusts with violence into the Mediterranean, and drown them in such quantities that their dead, being cast up on the shore, infect the air to a great distance."

It is necessary to remember that the prophets of God, who dealt with things past, things present, and things to come, often spoke of the future as if it were already past. A striking example is to be found in Isaiah liii. This being the case, it is not always easy to decide whether their words have a past or a future signification; and a difficulty of this kind meets us in Joel ii. 18. Several versions (Greek, Latin, Italian, &c.) treat the passage as referring to the past, and we shall take the liberty so to expound it, with no disrespect for our own beautiful English Bible.

JOEL ii. 18—iii. 21.

PARAPHRASE.

[So the trumpet was blown in Zion. A fast was proclaimed, and the people, old and young, were gathered together to confess their sin and seek forgiveness. The priests fell down before the temple

¹⁸ Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.

¹⁹ Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen:

²⁰ But I will remove far off from you the northern *army*, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. ²¹ Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice:

for the Lord will do great things.

²² Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig tree and the vine do yield their strength.

²³ Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first *month*.

²⁴ And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. ²⁵ And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army, which I sent among you. ²⁶ And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed.

²⁷ And ye shall know that I *am* in the midst of Israel, and *that I am* the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

doors, and cried: Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.] Then the fire of God's jealous anger was kindled against the locusts that had destroyed his land, and his heart was moved with compassion for his people. He said unto his servant, Thus saith the Lord unto his people: Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall have abundance. I will no longer let this affliction make you the laughing-stock of the heathen; I will remove your foes far from you, and will drive them into the wilderness. Some shall be drowned in the Salt Sea, others in the Great Sea, toward the west: on the shores thereof shall their carcasses putrefy and perish, because they have magnified themselves against my people. Fear not, O land, be glad and rejoice, for the Lord will magnify himself. Be not afraid, ye groaning cattle! The blasted country-side shall again be green with grass; the stricken trees shall again bear fruit, and the fig-tree and the vine again shall yield their produce. Be glad, therefore, ye children of Zion; and rejoice in the Lord your God, ye men of Judah: for he will give you the former rain in just measure, and the latter rain in due season, the rain of autumn and the showers of spring. The threshing-floors shall be filled with wheat, and the vats with wine and oil. I will restore to you all that ye have lost by locusts that swarm, locusts that devour, locusts that destroy, locusts that gnaw—my great army which I have sent among you. Ye shall eat in plenty, and shall be sufficed, and shall leave thereof; and ye shall praise my name because I have dealt wondrously with you. I *am* the Lord your God, and my people shall never be confounded. Ye

²⁸ And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: ²⁹ and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. ³⁰ And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. ³¹ The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. ³² And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

Thus far Joel has spoken of the visitation of God's anger which took place in his own days; he has exhorted the guilty people to repentance, and his exhortation has been used of God to bring them to the throne of grace; he has told of the removal of chastisement, the return of peace and plenty; and then, looking onward to gospel days, he has predicted the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. He now passes on to speak of the time of the end, as God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: he calls upon the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, God and Magog, to gather themselves together to battle: in holy irony he bids the weak among them pluck up courage to fight against the Lord, saying, "I am strong;" he sees the mighty angels of God mow them down with the sickle of slaughter, multitudes, multitudes in the valley of judgment, like in number unto the sand of the sea (Rev. xx. 8, 9).

Finally, he sees the holy city of God, into which shall enter no insulting foe, nor anything that defileth, neither whatso-

shall know that there is a God in Israel, and that there is none other beside me: and my people shall never be confounded.

And it shall come to pass in the latter days, in the days of Messiah's kingdom, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, upon Jew and Gentile. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your elders shall learn my will by dreams, and your young men by visions; and in those days I will pour out my Spirit on them of low degree. And there shall be signs in heaven, upon earth distress of nations through fire and sword; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light: and then shall the great and dreadful day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; for a remnant shall be left in Zion, and shall escape in Jerusalem, even the remnant whom I will call according to my promise.

ever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie ; and he cries, like Ezekiel in after times, " Jehovah Shammah—the Lord is there, the Lord dwelleth in Zion ! "

Some sayings in Joel's last chapter are of wide significance, and have various applications. We do not attempt to develop all these, or even to hint at them ; we rather leave in our paraphrase a measure of the vagueness which we find, or seem to find, in the prophet's own words.

¹For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, ²I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. ³And they have cast lots for my people ; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. ⁴Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine ? will ye render me a recompence ? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head ; ⁵because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things : ⁶the children also of Judah and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. ⁷Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head : ⁸and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off ; for the Lord hath spoken it.

⁹Proclaim ye this among the

For behold, in the latter days, at the time when I shall bring my people back from their exile to the city of their fathers, I will gather the nations together, and will bring them into the valley of Jehovah's judgment ; there will I judge them for their sins against my people, mine inheritance, whom they have scattered among the Gentiles, dividing among themselves the heritage of my people. Yea, they have made my people the prize of a game at dice ; they have paid away a Jewish slave as hire for a harlot, and a Jewish handmaid as the price of a drink of wine. What is your business with me, O Tyre and Sidon, and the land of the Philistines ? Would you requite God for his offences against you ? If ye seek requital, promptly and swiftly will I requite you for your deeds. For ye have robbed my land of the silver and the gold which I had given it, and have placed my treasures and vessels in the temples of your idols. Yea, ye have sold the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into slavery among the Greeks, far from the land of their birth : but I will bring them back from their captivity, and will reward you as ye have rewarded them ; for I will deliver your sons and daughters into their hand, and they shall sell them into slavery among the far-off Arabians : my mouth hath spoken it.

Publish ye this summons among

Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: ¹⁰ beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, *I am strong.* ¹¹ Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. ¹² Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. ¹³ Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness *is* great. ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord *is* near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. ¹⁶ The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord *will be* the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. ¹⁷ So shall ye know that *I am* the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. ¹⁸ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim. ¹⁹ Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence *against* the children of Judah, because they have shed

the Gentiles:—Prepare you for the battle: rouse up your captains, and let your warriors draw near and come: let your husbandmen beat their implements into weapons of war, and let the weakest among you gird up his loins like a man! Assemble yourselves and come, ye heathen: gather yourselves together against my people round about: at their prayer my mighty angels shall come down to slay you. Bestir yourselves, ye nations, and come to the valley of Jehovah's judgment: for there will I execute judgment upon you all. Then will I say to my reapers, Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe: tread the winepress of my wrath, for it is full, and the vats shall overflow with blood: for the wickedness of man is great. [I see all nations before the white throne of the great Judge!] Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of judgment: for the day of the Lord is come and the judgment is set. Sun and moon are dark, and the light of the stars is quenched. The Lord thunders out of Zion; the trump of God is heard from Jerusalem: heaven and earth shake at the sound and flee away. But Jehovah is a refuge to his people, a stronghold to his Israel; and they shall know that the Lord their God dwelleth in Zion, the mountain of his holiness: henceforth shall it be the Holy City, and the heathen shall enter its gates no more. Then shall the vines flourish upon the mountains, and flocks shall clothe the pastures on the hills. They shall give rivers of wine and milk; and the watercourses of the land shall be filled with water. Moreover, from the house of the Lord shall flow the river of the water of life, bearing blessing into the wilderness. The Egyptians and the

innocent blood in their land.
²⁰ But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. ²¹ For I will cleanse their blood *that* I have not cleansed: for the Lord dwelleth in Zion.

Edomites shall perish, because of the wrongs which they have done to my people, and because of the innocent blood which they have shed. But Judah shall be established for ever, the city of God to all generations. For I will avenge the blood of my saints which has not yet been avenged. I the Lord dwell in Zion.

NINTH HALF-HOUR.

Amos i., ii.

Amos was one of the shepherds who fed their flocks in the wilderness of Tekoa, in the land of Judah. Though certain schools for "the sons of the prophets" seem to have existed from the days of Samuel onwards, Amos had not been trained in one of them. He particularly disclaims any such education, and tells us that the Lord called him from tending flocks and fruit trees, and said to him: "Go prophesy unto my people Israel." Accordingly, in the latter part of the prosperous reign of Jeroboam the Second, the prophet went to Bethel, and there, at the king's court, uttered the seven-fold thunders of Jehovah's wrath against Israel, Judah, and the neighbouring nations. The lion had roared; who would not fear? The Lord God had spoken: who could but prophesy?

The Geneva Bible gives an admirable summary of this prophet's message. We cannot do better than transcribe it here, with two or three necessary amendments of the antiquated language:

"Among many other prophets that God raised up to admonish Israel of his plagues for their wicked idolatry, he stirred up Amos, who was a herdsman, or shepherd, of a poor town, and gave him both knowledge and constancy to reprove men of all stations and degrees, and to denounce God's terrible judgments against them except they did in time repent. He showed them that if God spared not the other nations round about them, who had lived in ignorance of him

and yet must be punished for their sins, the people of Israel could expect nothing but a terrible destruction unless they turned to the Lord by unfeigned repentance. And finally the prophet comforteth the godly with hope of the coming of the Messiah, by whom they should have perfect deliverance and salvation."

In previous Half-Hours we have sketched the history of Judah and Israel with sufficient fulness to throw some light on the utterances of Hosea, Joel, Amos, and others who prophesied in their days. A few words concerning some of the neighbouring nations may help us to understand the seven thunders with which Amos begins his book.

North of Israel dwelt the Syrians, who from the days of Benhadad and Hazael had crushed the land, and especially that part of it which lay east of Jordan, as with a threshing-wain of iron. We read that Elisha, when he met with Hazael in Damascus, gazed upon him and wept. Then said Hazael, "Why weepeth my lord?" And the man of God answered, "Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child."

To the west lay Palestina, the land of the Philistines, with cities whose names meet us continually in the records of Israel's wars: Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron. Philistia had gladly joined with Edom in its cry against Jerusalem, "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundations thereof!"

Tyre, too, in the far north-west—Tyre, whose king Hiram "was ever a lover of David," and entered into a brotherly covenant with Solomon to help him in the building of the temple—had now ignored all this ancient friendship, and assisted in oppressing those whom she once had loved.

Southward, in their Mount Seir, were the Idumæans or Edomites, the sons of Esau, whom the sons of Jacob had always been taught to regard as brothers. "Ye are to pass through the coasts of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir," said the Lord by Moses: "meddle not with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth, because I have given Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession." And in latter days Jehoshaphat had cried, "Behold, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of the possession which thou hast given us to inherit."

Toward the east the Ammonites and Moabites, though they also were in some sense brethren of Israel, being descended from Abraham's nephew Lot, had been confederate with Edom, and probably with Syria, in their cruel persecution of the chosen people. Ammon, who had threatened to thrust out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh Gilead in the days of Saul, and had insulted the ambassadors of king David, rivalled Hazael in his barbarous treatment of the women and babes of Gilead : and Moab, when at variance with Idumæa, had burned the bones of its king, venting his godless fury on the remains of the dead.

Against these six nations, with Judah as a seventh, the prophet utters the thunders of God's righteous wrath, and then passes on to denounce similar woes upon Israel, the guilty kingdom to which he was especially sent. Let us listen.

AMOS i., ii.

¹ The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. ² And he said, The Lord will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem ; and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

³ Thus saith the Lord ; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof ; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron : ⁴ but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. ⁵ I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden : and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the Lord.

PARAPHRASE.

The word of the Lord which was revealed to Amos, one of the herdsmen of Tekoa, concerning Israel, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, while Jeroboam the son of Joash yet reigned in Israel, two years before the earthquake. The sound of the Lord's thunder shall be heard from Zion, the voice of his wrath from Jerusalem : it shall blast the land, so that the pastures shall wither in the valleys, the vine and the olive on the hills.

Thus saith the Lord : thrice have the Syrians transgressed ; yea, a fourth time have they sinned, and the measure of their iniquity is now full : therefore I will not spare. For they have crushed my people in Gilead, as the iron wain crusheth the straw upon the threshing-floor. But I will send the flame of war into the house of Hazael, and it shall consume the palaces of Benhadad. I will break open the gates of Damascus ; I will cut off them that dwell in the Valley of Vanity, and him that ruleth over the pleasure-gardens of Syria. And the Syrians shall be carried captive

⁶ Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver *them* up to Edom: ⁷ but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: ⁸ and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron: and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God.

⁹ Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: ¹⁰ but I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof.

¹¹ Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever: ¹² but I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

¹³ Thus saith the Lord; For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof; because they have ripped up the women with child of

to the land whence they came, saith the Lord. [See Amos ix. 7, and 2 Kings xvi. 9.]

Thus saith the Lord: thrice have the Philistines transgressed; yea, a fourth time have they sinned, and the measure of their iniquity is now full; therefore I will not spare. Multitudes of my people have they seized to deliver them up to Edom. But I will send the flame of war against the wall of Gaza, and it shall consume the palaces thereof. I will cut off the people of Ashdod and the ruler of Ashkelon: I will overthrow Ekron, and destroy the remnant of the Philistines, saith the Lord God.

Thus saith the Lord: thrice hath Tyre transgressed; yea, a fourth time hath she sinned, and the measure of her iniquity is now full: therefore I will not spare. Multitudes of my people have they delivered up to Edom, and have forgotten the covenant of their forefathers. [Read 1 Kings v. 1—12.] But I will send the flame of war against the wall of Tyre, and it shall devour her palaces.

Thus saith the Lord: thrice hath Edom transgressed; yea, a fourth time hath he sinned: therefore I will not spare. For he hath persecuted his brother with the sword, and hath shut up his bowels of compassion. His anger hath raged continually, and his wrath hath been unrestrained from age to age. But I will send the flame of war against the sons of Esau, and it shall devour the palaces of Bozrah.

Thus saith the Lord: thrice have the Ammonites transgressed; yea, a fourth time have they sinned: therefore I will not spare. They have destroyed in Gilead the children yet unborn, lest they should

Gilead, that they might enlarge their border : ¹⁴ but I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind : ¹⁵ and their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the Lord.

¹ Thus saith the Lord ; For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof ; because he burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime : ² but I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kiriath : and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, *and* with the sound of the trumpet : ³ and I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the Lord.

⁴ Thus saith the Lord ; For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof ; because they have despised the law of the Lord, and have not kept his commandments, and their lies caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked : ⁵ but I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem.

⁶ Thus saith the Lord ; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away *the punishment* thereof ; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes ; ⁷ that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek : and a man and his father will go in unto the *same* maid, to profane my holy name : ⁸ and they lay *themselves* down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned *in* the house of

live to check their conquests. But I will kindle the flame of war upon the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces of the children of Ammon, amid the shouting of the battle and the whirlwind of war. Their king shall be carried into captivity, and his nobles with him, saith the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord : thrice hath Moab transgressed ; yea, a fourth time hath he sinned ; therefore I will not spare. For he hath burned into lime the bones of the king of Edom. But I will send the flame of war upon Moab, and it shall consume the palaces of Kiriath. And the men of Moab shall die amid tumult, and shouting, and the blare of trumpets. I will cut off their ruler from among them, and will slay all his nobles with him, saith the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord : thrice hath the kingdom of Judah transgressed ; yea, a fourth time hath it sinned : therefore I will not spare. For they have cast away the law of the Lord, and have broken his statutes. The lying vanities after which their fathers walked have caused them also to err. But I will send the flame of war against Judah, and it shall consume the palaces of Jerusalem.

Thus saith the Lord : thrice hath the kingdom of Israel transgressed ; yea, a fourth time hath it sinned : therefore I will not spare. For they have sold the innocent for money, and the needy for nought. They grudge the poor the very dust sprinkled on their heads in token of mourning, and they lay stumbling-blocks in the way of the meek. My holy name is blasphemed among the Gentiles through their incontinent lusts. [Moreover, I have said, If thou take thy neighbour's garment to pledge, thou shalt

their god. ⁹ Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height *was* like the height of the cedars, and he *was* strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath.

¹⁰ Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.

¹¹ And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. *Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?* saith the Lord. ¹² But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink; and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not. ¹³ Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed *that is full of sheaves*.

¹⁴ Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself: ¹⁵ neither shall he stand that handleth the bow; and *he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself*: neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. ¹⁶ And *he that is courageous among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day*, saith the Lord.

restore it unto him by that the sun goeth down. Ex. xxii. 26, 27.] But they sleep on pledged clothes beside the altars of their idols, and in the houses of their gods they drink the wine of those whom they have mulcted. Yet I destroyed before them the nations of Canaan, lofty as the cedar and mighty as the oak: I destroyed them root and branch. I brought you up out of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, that ye might inherit their land. I took of your sons to serve me as prophets and as Nazarites: ye yourselves are witnesses thereof, O children of Israel, saith the Lord. But ye tempted the Nazarites to break their vows, and stopped the mouths of the prophets. Behold, ye have made me to groan beneath your sins, as a cart groans beneath its load of sheaves. Therefore refuge shall fail the swift; the strength of the strong shall not avail him; the mighty shall not escape; the archer shall not stand in the battle; the swift of foot shall not be able to flee; the horse and his rider shall be overtaken and overthrown; and the shield of the mighty shall be vilely cast away, saith the Lord.

Can we doubt that these terrible prophecies had terrible fulfilments? What if some are unrecorded? We may judge of all by one. Look at yonder desolate stretch of rock and sand: here and there stands a fisher's hut, and everywhere lie the outspread nets. 'Tis the place where Tyre stood, or rather the grave where she lies buried, according to the word of the Lord by Amos and Ezekiel. [Ezek. xxvi. 14.]

TENTH HALF-HOUR.

AMOS iii., iv.

It has been said of John Calvin that "perhaps no individual possessing his high qualifications—natural, acquired, and spiritual—has ever exercised himself so much in the study of the Holy Scriptures, and produced comments so original and so valuable." And again: "What is remarkable in Calvin as an expositor is his unvarying attention to the context. This was his polar star, which enabled him to steer clear and safe through so many intricacies and ambiguities as to the meaning of particular words, and even of sentences. His first object seems to have been to ascertain the general drift of a passage or a chapter; and his next, to harmonise its several parts. There are many words which have various meanings; and the surest way of ascertaining the meaning in any given sentence is to inquire what comports with the context. Probably no commentator has ever paid so much attention to this rule as Calvin did. The ground on which he rejects a sense given by others to words or sentences, is almost always that 'it does not square with the context.'"

In studying the portion which now lies before us and endeavouring to reach the genuine meaning of its "dark sayings" (Prov. i. 6), we have consulted the writings of this great and godly expositor; and we think we shall interest and instruct our readers by laying before them some of his remarks on the extraordinary succession of metaphors and questions which the prophet employs in delivering his message to Israel (Amos iii. 3—8). Calvin writes—

"The prophet here accumulates similitudes, which may be reduced to five particulars.

1. He shows that he uttered no empty words, but had God's authority for what he said: he appeals to him as his witness and approver.

2. He shows that God designedly announces the punishment which he would inflict upon transgressors, that they might in time repent; and that he does not cry out for no reason, but is driven to anger by just causes, and therefore alarms them by his prophets.

3. He teaches that nothing happens by chance, that the Israelites might thereby be made to consider more attentively the judgments of God.

4. He declares that men are ignorant and brutish when they are not moved by the threats which they hear from God.

5. He intimates that the execution of God's threats was ready to take place, and that when God has denounced anything his threatenings are not vain, like those with which we sometimes frighten children."

We have always understood the question in verse three of this chapter to refer rather to the previous than to the succeeding verses, and to mean that Israel cannot expect to walk comfortably with God without being truly subject to his holy word and will. But Calvin, after noticing this interpretation and rejecting it as being evidently strained, goes on to say: "Amos, by this similitude, very fitly sets forth the accordance between God and his prophets. He asks, 'Will two walk together except they mutually agree?' As though he said, 'Ye are mistaken in judging of me as though I were alone. I am sent by God, and endued with the gift of prophecy. Since, then, I speak by God's Spirit, I do not walk alone; for God goes before, and I am his companion. Know, then, that whatever I bring forward proceeds not from me, but has God for its author.' This seems to be the genuine meaning of the prophet. He affirms that he faithfully discharged his office, for he had not separated himself from God, but was his companion, as when two agree together to travel the same road."

Thus Calvin. We are not quite sure that his interpretation is right; it seems to us somewhat more "strained" than that to which he objects. Nevertheless we have transcribed it here to show the extreme care with which this great theologian pondered the utterances of God's prophets. Our readers must choose between Calvin's exposition and that which we are about to place before them as our own. And now let us give ear to Amos.

AMOS iii., iv.

¹ Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, ² You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. ³ Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

PARAPHRASE.

The Lord speaketh against you, O children of Israel, even against the whole family which he brought up out of the land of Egypt; hearken to his words: Out of all the families of the earth I have chosen you alone to be my people: therefore will I visit your sins upon you; for they are all committed against light and love. Your

⁴ Will a lion roar in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? ⁵ Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? ⁶ Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? ⁷ Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. ⁸ The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?

⁹ Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria, and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. ¹⁰ For they know not to do right, saith the Lord, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. ¹¹ Therefore thus saith the Lord God; An adversary *there shall be* even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. ¹² Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus *in a couch*. ¹³ Hear ye, and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord

heart is not right with me: how then can ye walk with me?

[There is a cause for my anger.] Doth a lion in the forest roar without cause? Do his whelps growl without cause in their lair? [As the lion roars upon his prey, so I lift up my voice against your sins.] Can a bird be trapped where no snare is? [Even so his own iniquities shall take the wicked.] Doth a snare spring up from the ground and catch nothing? [Even so shall my judgments overtake the sinner.] Doth the trumpet sound an alarm in the city when there is nothing to fear? [Even so my warnings might well make you afraid.] Or think ye that calamity cometh by chance, and that the Lord hath no hand therein? Nay, he claimeth it as his handiwork by revealing it beforehand to his prophets. Who can but fear, when the lion roareth? Who can but prophesy, when the Lord God speaketh? (See Jeremiah xx. 9.)

Come, ye heathen, and behold the perverseness of my people, saith the Lord. Come from the palaces of Philistia and Egypt: stand upon the mountains that overlook Samaria, and see what rioting fills the city, and what oppression is wrought in the midst thereof! My people know not how to do justice and judgment: they fill their palaces with ill-gotten gain, the fruit of violence and robbery. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: My servant the Assyrian shall come against thee, O Samaria. He shall compass thee about with armies, bring down thy strength to the ground, and spoil thy palaces of their treasures. Thus saith the Lord: The children of Israel live in Samaria in ease and luxury—they stretch themselves on couches, and recline on cushions of damask;

God, the God of hosts, ¹⁴that in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him I will also visit the altars of Beth-el: and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. ¹⁵And I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the Lord.

¹ Hear this word, ye kine of Bashan, that *are* in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. ²The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks. ³And ye shall go out at the breaches, every *cow at that which is* before her; and ye shall cast *them* into the palace, saith the Lord.

⁴ Come to Beth-el, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, *and* your tithes after three years: ⁵and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim *and* publish the free offerings: for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

⁶ And I also have given you

but they shall all be destroyed save a miserable remnant, like unto the shin bones of a sheep or a piece of its ear left by a lion for the shepherd to pick up. Hear my words, ye prophets, and testify against the house of Jacob, saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts. When Israel's day of visitation cometh, I will visit the altars reared to golden calves in Bethel: I will destroy them, and lay them level with the ground. I will also smite the mansions of the rich, their winter parlours, their summer parlours, and their halls inlaid with ivory: they shall be utterly destroyed, saith the Lord. [For fulfilment, see 2 Kings xvii. 5, 6.]

Hear this word, ye high-born ladies of Samaria, fair and wanton as the cows that feed in the rich pastures of Bashan: ye that oppress the poor, crush the needy, and say to your lordly husbands, "Bring us wine, that we may drink." The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness that the day shall come when ye shall be dragged from your homes as fish are dragged from the water by the fisher's hook. Then shall ye go forth of the city through the breaches made in the walls, each one straight before her in wild haste to escape; and ye shall be hurried away into exile, saith the Lord.

Fill up the measure of your iniquity! Worship your calves at Bethel, and multiply your idolatries at Gilgal! Bring your vain sacrifices every morning, and offer your tithes continually at the appointed times! Burn leaven upon mine altar in violation of my statutes; proclaim your voluntary offerings, and publish them to all men! For thus ye love to have it, ye children of Israel, saith the Lord God.

I have afflicted you with famine

cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

⁷ And also I have withholden the rain from you, when *there were* yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece where-upon it rained not withered. ⁸ So two or three cities wandered unto one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

⁹ I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm devoured *them*: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

¹⁰ I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses; and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

¹¹ I have overthrown *some* of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord.

¹² Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: *and* because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. ¹³ For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what *is* his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, *is* his name.

in all your cities, and with scarcity in all your land: yet have ye not repented, saith the Lord.

I have withholden the rain from you when it was most needed to mature your harvest: I have sent rain on one city and denied it to another, that ye might see my hand: I have sent rain upon one field, and withered up another field with drought: thus two or three cities have gone to another city for water, and have not found enough: yet have ye not repented, saith the Lord.

I have blasted your crops with my east wind, and blighted them with my mildew: I have sent the locusts to devour your many gardens and vineyards and fig-trees and olive-trees: yet have ye not repented, saith the Lord.

I have put upon you the plagues of Egypt: I have given your young men to the sword, and your horses to your enemies; and the stench of your slain has come up into your nostrils: yet have ye not repented, saith the Lord.

I have destroyed *some* of you as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, and have plucked a small remnant as a brand from the burning: yet have ye not repented, saith the Lord.

Therefore will I do unto thee as I have said, O Israel: *and* because I am about to deal thus with thee, prepare thine heart to meet thy God, O Israel! For, lo, I am he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, that searcheth the heart of man, that maketh light and darkness, and treadeth down the high places of the earth as dust beneath his feet: the Lord God of hosts *is* his name.

Who would not fear thee, thou King of Nations?

ELEVENTH HALF-HOUR.

AMOS V., vi.

THE more we study the writings of the prophets, the more convinced do we become that the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and just in the infliction of the severest judgments that have fallen on a guilty world, and particularly on the stiff-necked nation to whom all day long he stretched out his hands. He blessed them exceedingly, and they delighted themselves in the abundance of his bounty; nevertheless they were disobedient and rebelled against him, and cast his law behind their back, and slew his prophets which testified against them to turn them again unto him; and they wrought great provocations. (See Neh. ix. 24—35.)

How is it, then, that Amos calls a nation like this, “the virgin of Israel”? Certainly not because she was the chaste betrothed of the Lord of hosts, but simply because it was the custom of the times so to speak of nations; much as we call our own nation Britannia, and impress upon our coins the image of a stately maiden who sits, trident in hand, as mistress of the sea. This instance may well remind us of the care and wisdom which are required in the interpretation of Holy Scripture, and of the danger of engrafting our own ideas upon the oracles of God. Calvin, with his customary wisdom, has said: “Expositors have explained this word ‘virgin’ with too much refinement. They think that the people of Israel are here called a ‘virgin’ because God had espoused them to himself, and because they ought to have observed spiritual chastity towards him. . . . But ‘virgin,’ as we know, is the title given by the prophets to this or that people on account of their daintiness: for Babylon, no less than Samaria or Israel, is called a ‘virgin.’ Certainly this refined interpretation cannot be applied to Babylon, to Egypt, to Tyre, and to other places.”

Speaking at a time when the nation was yet prosperous and strong, Amos views its approaching desolation by the Assyrian armies as the downfall of a dainty, haughty, high-born maiden, dashed to the ground upon her own land, never to rise again. He sings a sad dirge over her sad fall, and calls upon his countrymen to listen, if haply at the eleventh hour they might turn from their wickedness and live.

AMOS v., vi.

¹ Hear ye this word which I take up against you, *even* a lamentation, O house of Israel.

² The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; *there is* none to raise her up.

³ For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out *by* a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth *by* an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel. ⁴ For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live: ⁵ but seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. ⁶ Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour *it*, and *there be* none to quench *it* in Beth-el.

⁷ Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth, ⁸ *seek him* that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord is his name: ⁹ that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress.

¹⁰ They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him

PARAPHRASE.

I mourn your overthrow, O house of Israel: give ear to the words of my lament. Yet a little while and the virgin of Israel shall fall to rise no more. See! She lies prostrate on the ground that God had given her, and there is none to raise her up!

Thus saith the Lord: The cities of Israel that could put a thousand men in the field shall have but a hundred left; and those that could send forth a hundred shall have but ten left. For thus saith the Lord to the house of Israel: Unless ye seek me ye shall not live. Therefore worship no longer the calf of Bethel, the idols of Gilgal, the shrine of Beersheba: for the idolaters of Gilgal shall be carried away captive, and the worshippers at Bethel shall be made like unto the dumb image before which they bow. Seek the Lord, and it shall go well with you: but if ye will still seek your idols, he will kindle the flame of war in Ephraim, and a fire that cannot be extinguished shall devour Bethel; for your judges are guilty of bitterest injustice, and ye trample equity beneath your feet. And yet the God of Israel is he that maketh the constellations of the sky, and the seasons which they mark; he that turneth the blackness of the night into the brightness of the morning, and again causeth the light of day to give place to the darkness of the night; he that breaketh up the fountains of the deep, and poureth out its waters upon the face of the earth as destroying floods or as gentle showers: Jehovah is his name. He bringeth swift destruction upon the mighty, and maketh the defended city a heap of ruins.

They who sit in the gate to administer the law pervert the

that speaketh uprightly. ¹¹ Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. ¹² For I know your manifold transgressions and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*. ¹³ Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time. ¹⁴ Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live: and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken. ¹⁵ Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

¹⁶ Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing *shall be* in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. ¹⁷ And in all vineyards *shall be* wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord.

¹⁸ Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end *is* it for you? the day of the Lord *is* darkness, and not light. ¹⁹ As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. ²⁰ *Shall* not the day of the Lord

law; and if one reproveth them they hate him, if one speaketh uprightly they abhor him. Seeing, then, that ye trample on the poor, and extort from them the wheat which their toil has grown, ye shall be driven from the lordly dwellings which ye have built, and strangers shall drink the wine of the pleasant vineyards which ye have planted. The number of your transgressions is marked before me, and the greatness of your sins is known to me, O ye who condemn the righteous, and justify the wicked for a bribe, and withhold the rights of the poor, so that the wise are compelled to keep silence, because the days are evil. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good: so shall ye live, and not die; so shall the Lord of hosts, of whom ye say that he is your God, be with you indeed. Abhor that which is evil, love that which is good; execute justice in your courts: peradventure the Lord of hosts will yet spare the remnant of Israel.

Thus saith Jehovah, the Lord God of hosts: The squares of Samaria shall be full of wailing, and the streets thereof shall resound with woe; the ploughman shall be called from the fields to mourn, and the singing-men and singing-women shall utter their lamentations; yea, in the vineyards shall be wailings instead of vintage songs: for I will pass through the land to smite it, saith the Lord.

Ye say, "O that the day of the Lord were come!" Woe unto you! Wherefore do ye desire the day of the Lord? It will bring darkness, not light. Your vain hope of deliverance will be like that of a man who flees from a lion and is met by a bear; who flees into his house from the bear,

be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? ²¹ I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. ²² Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. ²³ Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. ²⁴ But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.

²⁵ Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? ²⁶ But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to yourselves. ²⁷ Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.

¹ Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, *which are* named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! ² Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: *be they* better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? ³ Ye that put far away the evil

leans his hand on the wall, and is bitten by a serpent. Must not the day of the Lord be thus to an ungodly people—a day of darkness and not of light, a day of the shadow of death, without one gleam of brightness? I loathe and despise your festivals; I have no pleasure in your solemn meetings. Ye may offer your sacrifices and your gifts, but I will not accept them; neither will I regard your thank-offerings of fed beasts. Your songs of praise are but noise in mine ears: take them away, for I will not hear the music of your stringed instruments. Administer justice, and let it roll as a river through the land, and equity as a constant stream: [for in these things do I delight, saith the Lord.]

Did ye worship me with your sacrifices, when I led you for forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? [Was not your heart even then divided, and your worship therefore vain?] Yea, ye carried with you the figure of your idol-king, the shrines of your images, and the form of your star-god which ye made for yourselves. [And from those days until now ye have moved me to jealousy with strange gods;] therefore will I cause you to be carried into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is The God of hosts.

Woe to the nobles of Judah, who are at ease in Zion; to the princes of Israel who dwell securely in Samaria; the men of name in this great nation, the men to whom the people of Israel come for judgment and justice! Go ye, and consider the fate of Calneh: ponder the overthrow of Hamath the great: look at the ruins of Gath! Were their privileges higher than yours, or their territories

day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; ⁴that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; ⁵that chant to the sound of the viol, *and* invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; ⁶that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. ⁷Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed. ⁸The Lord God hath sworn by himself, saith the Lord the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city with all that is therein. ⁹And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. ¹⁰And a man's uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* and he shall say, No. Then shall he say, Hold thy tongue: for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord. ¹¹For, behold, the Lord commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts.

greater? [And yet, did not I judge them? How much more shall I judge you, who have abused greater privileges?] Ye put far from you the day of your calamity, and ye bring near to you a throne of violence: ye lie on beds inlaid with ivory; ye stretch yourselves on couches of luxury; ye eat the choicest of the flock and of the herd; ye sing songs to your psalteries, and devise for your pleasures instruments of music, such as David devised for the worship of his God; ye drink deep draughts of wine, and anoint yourselves with rich unguents: but ye are not in trouble for the calamities of the nation. Therefore shall ye be among the first to go into captivity, and the revellings that pleased you as ye stretched yourselves upon your couches shall come to an end. By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord God of hosts, I abhor the grandeur of Israel, [the excellent greatness to which I raised them, and which they have abused,] and I hate the palaces [which they have filled with the spoils of the poor:] therefore will I deliver up to the destroyer the city and all that is therein. And if in the straitness of the siege ten men be yet left in one house, nine of them shall die by pestilence: and when the next of kin shall come to drag forth and burn the corpses which he cannot bury, he shall call to the survivor in the midst of the house, "Are there yet any left here alive or dead beside thee?" And he shall answer, "No!" Then shall he reply, "Hush! we may not name the name of the Lord, nor cry to him for mercy." For, behold, it shall come to pass, the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, that the mansions of the great and the cottages of the poor shall be one heap of ruins.

¹² Shall horses run upon the rock? will *one* plow *there* with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock: ¹³ ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? ¹⁴ But, behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the Lord the God of hosts; and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.

Who but a madman would drive his horses up a cliff, or plough the face thereof with his oxen? With equal madness do ye put bitter for sweet, the bitterness of injustice for the sweetness of equity, and the wormwood of iniquity for the pleasant fruits of righteousness. Ye rejoice in that which is not, and ye say we have gotten to ourselves power by our own strength. But, behold, I will raise up against you, O house of Israel, a nation which shall afflict you through the length and breadth of your land, from the far north to the far south, saith the Lord God of hosts.

And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea, son of Elah, king of Israel, that Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up against Samaria and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken. And the king of Assyria carried Israel away into Assyria, and put them in Halah, and in Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes; because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God, but transgressed his covenant, even all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded, and would not hear it nor do it. And they said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us. (2 Kings xviii. 9—12; Zech. i. 6.)

TWELFTH HALF-HOUR.

AMOS vii.

“GRASSHOPPERS, fire, a plumbline! What does it all mean? It is beyond my comprehension: let me turn to my favourite psalm.” Nay, dear reader; all Scripture is profitable; and some of its mysterious passages are intended to arouse your attention, and to make you cry with one of old, “How can I understand what I read unless some man guide me?”

The grasshoppers which Amos saw in vision were not the innocent little beings which you see occasionally in our English meadows; they were locusts, God's great army, marshalled in battle array, as Joel tells us, for the chastisement of a guilty land. The fire was the flame of war: not a mere heap of burning fuel, but the devouring breath of violence and bloodshed, fire and sword, sweeping like a whirlwind of destruction over a guilty land. The plumbline was the unerring standard of divine righteousness, applied by the hand of God to show the crookedness of the wall which man had built and daubed with untempered mortar. Thus the three visions here recorded are full of instruction and solemn warning, saying to us, "Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Well might they excite the fear and anger of the priest of the golden calf! We can understand his trembling for the craft by which he had his wealth, and his crying to the man of God: "Get thee hence into the land of Judah, where thy teaching will be more welcome: but stay not here to overthrow our worship and provoke the wrath of our king."

Let us try to sketch the three epochs of Israel's history to which these three visions seem more particularly to refer.

1. Menahem, the son of Gadi, murdered king Shallum in Samaria, and reigned in that city over Israel for ten years, years spent in violence and wickedness (2 Kings xv. 14—18). Then Pul, the king of Assyria, came against the land, ready to consume it as the locusts consume the after-growth of the meadows. But the prophets of God cried to their God in secret to spare the land yet this once. And the Lord repented him of the evil, and caused that the invader should accept a sum of money and stay his hand. So the king of Assyria turned back and stayed no more in the land. "It shall not be," said the Lord. [2 Kings xv. 19, 20; Amos vii. 1—3.]

2. Menahem "slept with his fathers;" apparently he died in his bed, as we say. But his son Pekahiah fell before the sword of another usurper, Pekah, a man as wicked as Pekahiah, and destined in his own turn to meet the same violent end. In his days came Tiglath Pileser, king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. Again the prophets of the Lord cried to him in secret to spare the land

yet this once ; and the Lord repented him of the evil, and forbade the destroyer to do more than consume a small portion of Israel. The Lord said, "This also shall not be." [2 Kings xv. 27—29 ; Amos vii. 4—6.]

3. Hoshea, the son of Elah, made a conspiracy against Pekah, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. He also did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. Then Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, Shalmaneser took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt ; therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight ; there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. The Lord had come into the midst of Israel with the plummet of justice and the measuring line of judgment, and had refused to pass by their transgressions any more. [2 Kings xvii. 1—18 ; Amos vii. 7—9.]

Though the above interpretation of the visions of Amos may not be correct in every detail, it is certainly true to the spirit of his prophecy. But let us listen to the prophet.

AMOS vii.

¹Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me ; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth ; and, lo, *it was* the latter growth after the king's mowings. ²And it came to pass, *that* when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee : by whom shall Jacob arise ? for he *is* small. ³The Lord repented for this : It shall not be, saith the Lord.

⁴Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me : and, behold, the Lord God called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great

PARAPHRASE.

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and I saw a vision from God. The meadows had been mown for the king's cattle, and the people were waiting for the after-growth of grass. It was beginning to shoot forth ; but the Lord formed an army of locusts to devour it. And it came to pass when they had well-nigh consumed all the grass of the land, that I cried, O Lord, pardon the people, I beseech thee : for how shall they stand if thou do this ? They are already brought very low. Then the Lord regarded my intercession and repented him of the evil : this judgment shall not come, said the Lord God.

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and I saw a vision from God. Behold, the Lord God called for fire that it might plead his cause

deep, and did eat up a part. ⁵Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. ⁶The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God.

⁷Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall *made* by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. ⁸And the Lord said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: ⁹and the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

¹⁰Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words.

¹¹For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. ¹²Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there: ¹³but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. ¹⁴Then answered Amos, and said

against Israel and avenge their breach of his covenant. So the flame of war was kindled, devoured the foundations of the world, and consumed a portion of the land of Israel. Again I interceded with my God, and said, Destroy not Jacob, I beseech thee; how shall he stand if thou do this? He is already brought very low. Again the Lord repented him of the evil, and said, This judgment also shall go no further.

Again I saw a vision from God. The Lord himself with a plumbline in his hand stood by a wall that had been built by a plumbline. And he said unto me, What seest thou, Amos? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord unto me, Behold, I will measure the doings of my people with the plummet of justice and the measuring line of judgment. I will not hear thine intercession, nor will I any longer spare the land. The high places which they attribute to their father Isaac shall be destroyed, and the sanctuaries of the idols of Israel shall be laid waste, and the posterity of Jeroboam the son of Joash shall perish by the sword.

Then Amaziah, the priest of the golden calf at Bethel, sent word to the king, "Amos is forming a conspiracy against thee in the midst of the people, and the whole land is filled with his intolerable threats. He tells us that thou shalt be slain with the sword, and that Israel shall surely be carried into captivity." Amaziah said moreover unto Amos: "Get thee gone, thou prophet of evil! Hie thee to the land of Judah: there shall they feed thee for prophesying against us. But prophesy no longer here at Bethel, in the courts of the king's temple and at the doors of the king's

to Amaziah, I *was* no prophet, neither *was* I a prophet's son; but I *was* an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit: ¹⁵ And the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. ¹⁶ Now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord: Thou sayest, Prophesy not against Israel, and drop not *thy word* against the house of Isaac. ¹⁷ Therefore thus saith the Lord; Thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line; and thou shalt die in a polluted land: and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

palace." And Amos answered, "I followed my flock and tended my fruit-trees: I was no prophet, nor was I trained among the sons of the prophets. My commission was from the Lord God, who took me from behind my flock, and sent me to prophesy unto Israel. Now, therefore, listen to his word, thou that forbiddest me to prophesy against Israel, or to let fall my words against the children of Isaac. Thus saith the Lord: Thy wife shall fall a victim to the lust of the invader; thy children shall perish by his sword; thy land shall be divided among his warriors; thou thyself shalt die in exile among the heathen; and Israel shall surely be carried into captivity."

Is it a light matter to stop the mouth of any servant of the Most High?

THIRTEENTH HALF-HOUR.

AMOS viii., ix.

"WHAT connection is there between 'a basket of summer fruit' and 'the end of Israel'? How does a vision of the one show forth the coming of the other?" A fair question, good reader. We are glad to see that you weigh the words of the prophets, and desire to know their real meaning; for we have sometimes thought that if Paul were to put to each of us the question which he put to king Agrippa: "Believest thou the prophets?" many a one would have to reply, "I do not read them." To you, therefore, who read and desire to understand, we gladly offer a word of explanation. The Hebrew word for "summer fruit" is *kayitz* (pronounced kah-yits); the Hebrew word for "end" is *kêtz* (pronounced kates). The two have a very similar sound, and are derived from a common root. If we may be allowed to use the words "final fruit" to denote fruit gathered at the close of

the fruit season, we can reproduce the effect of the prophet's words in our own English tongue. He said, "I see a basket of final fruit:" then said the Lord unto him, "The finish is come."

It is well known that at a certain season of the year the river Nile overflows its banks, and transforms a large tract of the surrounding country into a sea of waters. To Egypt this is not a calamity, but a blessing; for after a time the waters sink away, and the softened land is rendered fit to produce rich crops. This overflow of the Nile is used by the Lord as an image of the destroying flood of Assyrian conquest which was to sweep away the ten tribes. We must not press the comparison too far, and say that the Assyrian conquest was ultimately a blessing. This interpretation would, as Calvin says sometimes of such subtleties, be "too refined." The overflow of the mighty river is merely used as a picture of the flood of judgment which was about to deluge the land.

One more word of introduction before we paraphrase the last two chapters of our prophet. When corn was sold in the days of Amos, it was measured out with an ephah, or bushel, and the silver which was paid for it was weighed in the balances against a weight which was called a shekel. When, therefore, the avaricious land-owners used an ephah that was too small and a shekel that was too great, they gave scant measure and exacted more than full price. And the Lord saw it, and it displeased him: for a false balance is abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight. Now let us learn once more of Amos.

AMOS viii., ix.

¹Thus hath the Lord God shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. ²And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the Lord unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. ³And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord God: *there shall be many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast them forth with silence.*

PARAPHRASE.

I saw a vision from the Lord God: behold, a basket of ripe fruit stood before me. And he said unto me, "Amos, what seest thou?" And I said, "A basket of ripe fruit." Then said the Lord unto me, "The vintage of the land is ripe, and I will tread the winepress of vengeance. I will no longer defer mine anger. The day is nigh when the palaces now filled with songs of mirth shall be filled with howlings of terror, saith the Lord. The slain of the Lord shall be many, and on every hand men shall cast forth

‘Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, ⁵saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? ⁶That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat? ⁷The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. ⁸Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt. ⁹And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: ¹⁰and I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. ¹¹Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: ¹²and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find *it*. ¹³In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. ¹⁴They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

their dead into the streets in dumb despair.”

Go to, now, ye rich men; listen to your doom: ye who devour the substance of the needy, and crush the poor so that they cannot live; ye that say, “Would that there were no sacred feasts to interrupt our selling of corn, no Sabbath days to hinder our trade in wheat. When the holy-day is past we will again give scant measure, and exact more than is due, dealing falsely with deceitful balances. We will purchase the poor like slaves, and buy the needy for nought, and sell refuse as good corn.” The Lord hath sworn, saying: As surely as I have watched over you to raise you to excellent greatness, so surely will I watch over you to requite all your sins. Shall not such iniquity shake the foundations of the land? Shall not universal sin bring universal sorrow? Yea, as the river of Egypt rises in its strength, floods the land, and sinks away, so shall your destruction come. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun of your prosperity to set at mid-day, and the night of sorrow to cover the earth at noon. Instead of feasts ye shall have mourning, instead of songs lamentations. All loins shall be girt with sack-cloth, and every head shall be shaved in mourning. Ye shall mourn as a man mourneth for the loss of an only son, and your day shall end in bitterness. Behold, the day is near, saith the Lord God, when I will send famine and thirst upon the land: no famine of bread, no thirst for water, but for the words of the Lord which ye shall no longer hear. Men shall wander through the length and breadth of the land, south, and east, and west, and north, running hither

and thither for a prophet by whom they may inquire of the Lord; but shall find none. The beauty of the maidens shall wither, and the vigour of the youths shall fail, because the Lord hath forsaken them. And they that swear by the abominable idol of Samaria, saying, "By the god of Dan! by the mysteries of Beersheba!" even these shall fall to rise no more.

¹I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said, Smite the lintel of the door that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them shall not flee away, and he that escapeth of them shall not be delivered.

²Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: ³and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: ⁴and though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.

⁵And the Lord God of hosts *is* he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as *by* the flood of Egypt. ⁶*It is* he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord *is* his name.

Again I saw a vision. The Lord stood by the altar in the temple of the golden calf, and said to the ministers of his vengeance, Smite the capitals of the columns, and cause the doors of the house to shake: make the ruins thereof to fall upon the heads of the worshippers and crush them; and if any escape they shall be slain with the sword: he that fleeth shall not make good his flight, and he that escapeth shall be overtaken. [There is no darkness nor shadow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.] For if they dig into the bowels of the earth, mine hand shall take them thence; if they climb to the stars of heaven, thence will I bring them down; if they hide in the caves on the mountain tops, there will I search them out and seize them; if they seek a refuge in the depths of the sea, the sea-monsters shall do my bidding and devour them; if they think to be safe in the land of their captivity, even there will I cause the sword of their foes to find them and to slay them: for I will watch over them in vengeance, not in mercy. I am the Lord, the Lord of Hosts. I will touch the land and it shall melt. Universal sin shall bring universal sorrow. A flood like that of Egypt shall rise, and drown the land, and sink again. I am he that layeth the beams of his chambers in the heaven, and

⁷ *Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the Lord. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?* ⁸ Behold, the eyes of the Lord God *are* upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. ⁹ For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. ¹⁰ All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

¹¹ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: ¹² that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the Lord that doeth this. ¹³ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. ¹⁴ And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat

buildeth its blue vault upon the earth; that calleth for the waters of the sea and poureth them out upon the face of the earth in gentleshower or destroying floods: the Lord is his name.

O ye children of Israel, what are ye to me more than the Ethiopians? [What have ye that ye have not received?] I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt: but did I not also bring up the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir? I am the Lord: behold, I have set mine eyes upon this sinful kingdom to destroy it from off the face of the earth: yet will I not utterly destroy the seed of Jacob, saith the Lord. For, lo, at my command the house of Israel shall be driven to and fro among all nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve: yet no grain of real wheat shall fall to the ground. But the sinners among them, which say evil shall not befall us nor harm overtake us, shall all perish by the sword.

Yet the day cometh when I will raise up the fallen dwelling of David, close up the breaches in its walls, revive it from its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old. Yea, the remnant of their enemies, of the heathen that oppressed them, shall be called by my name, shall be subject to my people, and shall share their blessings, saith the Lord, that doeth this. Behold, the days are coming, saith the Lord, when the harvest shall be so abundant that the reaper shall not finish it before the ploughman overtakes him, and the vintage so plentiful that the treading of the grapes shall last till seedtime; the vines upon the mountains shall give floods of wine, and the flocks and kine upon the hills shall give rivers of

the fruit of them. ¹⁵ And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

milk. I will bring back my people Israel from the land of their captivity, and they shall rebuild the desolate cities and dwell therein; they shall plant vineyards and drink the wine thereof; they shall till gardens and eat the fruit thereof; for I will plant them upon their land, and they shall enjoy for ever the heritage which I have given them, saith the Lord their God.

Who shall say how much of this temporal prosperity promised to the house of Jacob is an image of the blessings of apostolic days, how much belongs to believers in later times, and how much foreshadows that inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, which is reserved in heaven for all the Israel of God?

FOURTEENTH HALF-HOUR.

OBADIAH.

IN a ravine among the mountains of Seir, two or three days' journey south of the Dead Sea, may still be seen the ruins which mark the site of Selah (that is, Rock), the ancient capital of Edom. (See 2 Kings xiv. 7.) About five years after the capture of Jerusalem which was foretold and recorded by Jeremiah, the Edomites in their turn were subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and driven from the rocky strongholds in which they had trusted, the eagle's nest "which they had built among the stars of heaven." (See Jeremiah xlix. 16, and Obadiah 4.) Their capital was occupied by a colony of the people known as Nabathæans, and by them, or the Romans, who afterwards became their masters, was adorned with stately temples and monuments, and a magnificent theatre. But the place was doomed, and has long since become a scene of utter desolation, according to the word of the Lord by Isaiah: "From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever" (Isa. xxxiv. 10).

“The ravine varies in breadth from 12 to 150 feet, and the overhanging rocks almost shut out the sun’s rays. Through it an artificial passage was made about a mile long, the only way of access to the town. The traveller who penetrates thither through the surrounding dry and desert country finds piles of tombs excavated in the rock, with columns, obelisks, &c., &c., of imposing dimensions. . . . Astounding and almost numberless excavations are everywhere wrought in the front of the mountain, in its ravines and recesses, and even in the precipitous rocks around it; in many cases one rising above the other, and sometimes several hundred feet above the level of the valley, with steps cut in the solid rocks; some widely conspicuous, others hidden in the most inaccessible cliffs.” Such is the account given by modern travellers of “the secret places of Esau” (Jer. xlix. 16). But where are his children? They dwelt in the clefts of the rock; their habitation was high; they said in their heart, “Who shall bring us down to the ground?” Then said the Lord, “Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the Lord.” He spake, and it was done. The Chaldean forces stormed the mountain fortress, and executed the vengeance of God upon those who had said of Zion in the time of its calamity, “Rase it, rase it, even to the foundations thereof!” (Ps. cxxxvii. 7).

The Edomites still existed as a nation, and fought against the Jews after the return of the latter from the Babylonian captivity. But their doom was written by the finger of God: “There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau, for the Lord hath spoken it” (Obad. 18). And they withered away under the righteous anger of him who said by the last of the prophets: “I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the jackals of the wilderness.” Herod the Great was one of the last of the children of Edom; shortly after his day their name disappeared from history.

The prophet Obadiah was commissioned to foretell the destruction of Edom. We do not know when he lived; but on the whole it seems most probable that he was contemporary with Jeremiah, who was charged with a very similar message.

(See Jer. xlix.) We quote the following excellent summary from the Geneva Bible: "The Idumeans, which came of Esau, were mortal enemies always to the Israelites, which came of Jacob, and therefore did not only vex them continually with sundry kinds of cruelty, but also stirred up others to fight against them. Therefore when they were now in their greatest prosperity, and did most triumph against Israel, which was in great affliction and misery, God raised up his prophet to comfort the Israelites, forasmuch as God had now determined to destroy their adversaries, which did so sore vex them, and to send them such as should deliver them, and set up the kingdom of Messiah, which he had promised."

The fate of Edom may remind us of the doom that hangs over all the enemies of Christ and his Church. Rome seems to meet with much success now in this dear land of ours, which she has so often reddened with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus; but her triumph must be short. Before long it shall be said: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen! Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her."

Let us listen to the message of the prophet.

OBADIAH.

¹The vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom; We have heard a rumour from the Lord, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. ²Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. ³The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? ⁴Though thou exalt *thyself* as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. ⁵If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape gatherers

PARAPHRASE.

The word of the Lord which was revealed to Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord God concerning Edom: I will stir up the nations against thee, and they shall gather all their forces, saying, Arise, and let us make war upon Edom. Behold, I will abase thee among the nations, and they shall despise thee. Thou dwellest in thy rocky fastnesses on the lofty mountains, and thou sayest in thine heart, Who shall reach me here? But thy pride deceiveth thee. Though thou shouldest soar as the eagle, and set thy nest among the stars, thence would I bring thee down, saith the Lord. If thieves and robbers came to thee in the night (how great is thy ruin!) they would but take what they could carry; some gleanings would they leave thee from the vintage of

came to thee, would they not leave *some* grapes? ⁶ How are the *things* of Esau searched out! *how* are his hidden things sought up! ⁷ All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee *even* to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, *and* prevailed against thee; *they that eat thy bread* have laid a wound under thee: *there is* none understanding in him. ⁸ Shall I not in that day, saith the Lord, even destroy the wise *men* out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? ⁹ And thy mighty *men*, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter. ¹⁰ For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. ¹¹ In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of them. ¹² But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. ¹³ Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldst not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid *hands* on their substance in the day of their calamity; ¹⁴ Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. ¹⁵ For the day of the

destruction. But the enemies of Esau shall discover all his hiding-places, and spoil him of all his hidden treasures. All his confederates shall dismiss and reject him; his allies shall deceive him and overthrow him; his friends shall deal treacherously with him; and he shall be at his wit's end. For in that day, saith the Lord, I will certainly destroy the councillors of Edom, and bring to nought the wisdom of the mount of Esau. The warriors of Teman shall turn their backs before their foes; every one of them shall be cut off by the sword from the mount of Esau. Thou shalt be covered with shame and destroyed for ever because of thy cruelty to thy brother Jacob. For when foreigners entered into his gates, plundered his substance, and cast lots for the spoils of Jerusalem, thou didst look on and didst take part with them. Why lookest thou on thy brother's trouble in the day of his overthrow, rejoicing over Judah's children in the day of their ruin, and taunting them in the day of their distress? Why enterest thou into the city of my people in the day of their calamity? Why lookest thou on their affliction in the day of their calamity? Why sharest thou in the plunder in the day of their calamity? Wherefore standest thou in the cross-roads to cut off their escape? Wherefore deliverest thou up their fugitives unto the pursuer? The day is at hand when the Lord will judge all the heathen; then shalt thou also, O Edom, be requited according to thy works, and the evil that thou hast done shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk the wine of revelry upon my holy mountain in the day of its calamity, so shall ye drink long draughts of the

Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head. ¹⁶For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been. ¹⁷But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. ¹⁸And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau, for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be *any* remaining of the house of Esau; for the Lord hath spoken it. ¹⁹And *they of* the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and *they of* the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria; and Benjamin *shall* possess Gilead. ²⁰And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel *shall* possess that of the Canaanites, *even* unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. ²¹And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord's.

wine of judgment, all of you: yea, ye shall drink the cup of vengeance to the dregs, and the place that now knoweth you shall know you no more for ever. But a remnant shall be left in Zion; it shall be a holy city: and the house of Jacob shall again possess the land which I gave them for a possession. Judah shall be a fire, and Israel a flame; they shall destroy and devour the house of Esau as stubble, and unto the house of Esau shall be left no remnant; for the Lord hath spoken it. The Israelites of the South [the South, or the Negeb, was a district at the southern end of Palestine,] shall possess Mount Seir; the Israelites of the western plain shall possess Philistia; they of the centre shall possess the territory of Ephraim and Samaria; and they of Benjamin shall possess Gilead. And the Israelitish exiles who are scattered among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath, together with the exiles from Jerusalem who are in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the South. [Yea, my people shall enlarge their borders on all sides.] And I will raise up deliverers on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau: and I the Lord will reign for ever.

The Maccabean princes gained many a victory over Edom, and the children of Esau are now no more. The word of the Lord by Obadiah is thus, in part, fulfilled before our eyes: the fulfilment of the rest is equally sure, though the manner thereof has yet to be revealed. Christ waits till all his enemies be put beneath his footstool. In that day shall this song be sung on the height of Zion: "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."

FIFTEENTH HALF-HOUR.

JONAH.

Among the oracles of God which were committed to the Jews (see Rom. iii. 2) stands the book of the prophet Jonah. This fact alone suffices to stamp it with divine authority, and to distinguish the miracles which it records from the lying wonders of false religions. The Lord God of the holy prophets did not employ his servants to perpetuate fables, or to dignify common folk-lore with a place in Holy Writ. We need not therefore be in the least degree moved by the reasonings and assertions of men who profess to believe in Christ, and yet are more than slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken—the very prophets who bore witness of him and to whom he bore witness. Such men have made many attacks on the book of Jonah, and some of their attacks have a very plausible appearance of tenderness and reverence. They tell us that we lose nothing by looking upon the book as a beautiful allegory, akin to Jotham's parable of the trees (Judges ix. 8—15), or an instructive piece of sacred fiction describing events that never took place and never could have taken place. The root of all such teaching is unbelief. All men have not faith; and those who have none account faith to be blindness. In their darkness they talk of "blind faith," and know not that faith is a very real eyesight, which apprehends very real facts. They cannot believe a miracle, be it ever so real and well attested; and as this book is miraculous from first to last, they either reject it altogether or degrade it to the level of a fable.

We will not stay to discuss the question whether a fish can swallow a man, whether a man swallowed by a fish could remain in its bowels for three days and three nights and then be vomited forth alive upon the dry land, whether a gourd could spring up in one night and perish in another. It is enough for us that these things are written in the Word of God, and that they are confirmed by the express testimony of Jesus Christ our Lord. He called the entombment of Jonah a sign, that is, a miracle. (Compare Matt. xii. 38—40 and Rom. xv. 19.) He referred to this miracle as an historic fact, which was designed by God to foreshadow another fact equally real, namely, his own sojourn in the grave. He spoke of the repentance of the Ninevites as real repentance brought

about by Jonah's preaching, and destined to be remembered at the day of judgment to the confusion of that generation which rejected a greater than Jonah. Guided by these considerations we receive this book as simply and literally true from beginning to end, and we look upon the miracles which it records as an illustration of our Lord's statement that the things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

It has been well said that "the attempt to obliterate miracles from Scripture, though supported in some instances by no small measure of ingenuity and learning, ought in the strongest manner to be deprecated and condemned, as being nothing less than a sacrilege, the robbery of God's Word of one of its peculiar characteristics, even of that by which God has visibly proved his supreme power; for by controlling and modifying the laws of nature, which at the creation he had fixed and established, he has given a manifest demonstration of his omnipotence and sovereignty; he has made it known to the world by miracles that he who has constructed the wonderful mechanism of nature can change and reconstruct it whenever he pleases."

Little is known of the personal history of Jonah. We learn from 2 Kings xiv. 25 that in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash (Jeroboam II.), the Lord God of Israel spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher, because he saw that the affliction of the people was very bitter, and it was not his will to blot out the name of Israel from under heaven. It seems therefore that the word of the Lord by Jonah to Israel was a word of encouragement, a prophecy of victory and deliverance, which accordingly came to pass in the reign of Jeroboam the Second. Nothing else is known concerning this prophet but what is written in the book that bears his name. There we are told that he was sent to threaten Nineveh with destruction, and that the Ninevites repented at his preaching and were spared. Moreover, God's power to bring good out of evil is wonderfully shown in the fact that Jonah's rebellion was met by a chastisement which was an emblem and a prophecy of the Redeemer's burial and resurrection. How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out!

Sixty or seventy years ago the site of Nineveh was unknown.

The sceptics of those days said, "How could a great city with walls sixty miles in circuit"—a city of three days' journey—"and a population of at least half a million, have disappeared from the face of the earth, leaving no trace of its existence?" Here was a positive proof that the book of Jonah was only a myth. Nineveh and the fish's belly were equally fictitious. But the pickaxe and the spade often tell the truth where sceptical critics tell lies. So it was in this case. Botta and Layard unearthed the city from certain mysterious mounds that stood on the banks of the Tigris; and the sculptures which adorned its palaces and registered its triumphs may now be seen in the Louvre and in the British Museum. With these before his eyes even a sceptic can believe that the Assyrian capital contained 120,000 little children who could not discern their right hand from their left, and that much cattle grazed in the parks enclosed within the circuit of its mighty walls. We cannot here enlarge upon this subject. The repentance brought about by Jonah's visit prolonged the existence of Nineveh for a century. The cup of its iniquity was then full, and a second prophecy of its destruction—which was uttered by God's servant Nahum—seems to have been fulfilled without further delay. The empire which had been as a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches and of a high stature, was delivered into the hand of the heathen; and strangers, the terrible of the nations, cut off the Assyrian, and left him. His branches fell upon the mountains and in the valleys, all the peoples of the earth departed from his shadow, and the nations shook at the sound of his fall. (See Eze. xxxi.) Nineveh was so completely blotted out by the ministers of God's vengeance that modern sceptics have found in its disappearance one of their foolish proofs of the falsity of God's Word!

The Tarshish to which Jonah fled was one of the ports with which the Phœnicians traded in the Mediterranean. Their ships were manned by sailors of various nationalities. We can understand, therefore, that in the storm each man called upon his own god. Peradventure the God of grace brought them, or some of them, to a saving knowledge of himself.

The style of Jonah's prophecy is so simple and direct that it needs no paraphrase. Study it, reader, and learn from it the importance of repentance, the folly of rebellion, the

fading nature of all earthly gourds, the longsuffering of God towards sinner and saint, the certainty of his judgment, and the mystery of the Redeemer's death and resurrection.

Many a child of God, walking the beaten track of tribulation, has found comfort in Jonah's psalm, which we here endeavour to reproduce in verse.

JONAH ii.

²I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, *and* thou heardest my voice.

³For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.

⁴Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.

⁵The waters compassed me about, *even* to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.

⁶I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars *was* about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.

⁷When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.

⁸They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

JONAH'S PSALM.

I called upon thee in my misery,
O thou that hearest prayer:
From hell's dark prison-house I
cried to thee,
And, lo, my God was there!

Thine hand had plunged me to
the lowest deep
Of ocean's secret bed;
I heard thy mighty whirlpools
round me sweep;
Thy waves went o'er my head.

I said, The light of love divine is
gone,
Never to shine again:
Yet will I look once more to that
sweet throne
Where grace and mercy reign.

The billowy torrents fiercely o'er
me rolled
Till heart and soul were drowned:
A winding-sheet of weeds with
oozy fold
Encompassed me around.

The roots of mountains stood like
bars of doom
About my prison door:
Yet thou hast brought my life
from death's dark womb
To praise thee evermore.

When all my fainting powers
within me died,
I said, My God is near:
Then toward thy holy oracle I
cried,
And thou didst bow thine ear.

Whoso departs from thee, thou
God of grace,
And follows idols vain,
Forsakes the only fount of joy
and peace
For misery and pain.

°But I will sacrifice unto thee
with the voice of thanksgiving ; I
will pay *that* that I have vowed.
Salvation is of the Lord.

But I with gladsome sacrifice of
praise
Thy mercies will record.
My ransomed soul her vow with
wonder pays :
Salvation to the Lord !

SIXTEENTH HALF-HOUR.

MICAH i., ii.

LET us stand awhile on the top of this beautiful hill and look around. Far away to the west the landscape slopes down to the blue waters of the Mediterranean. In all directions, west and east and south and north, stretch the plains and hills of Palestine ; and some six hundred feet below us lie the valleys that skirt the foot of the hill on which we stand. But what are these heaps of rubbish ? What are those stones that have covered the hillside and rolled into the vale below ; these scores and scores of columns, whereof a few still stand erect and look down as with pity on their fallen and shattered fellows ? This is that which was spoken of the Lord by his servant Micah : “ I will make Samaria as a heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard : and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof.” The Lord hath confirmed the word of his servant, and performed the counsel of his messenger (Isa. xlv. 26).

Having foretold the destruction of the capital of the ten tribes in language which has been thus wonderfully fulfilled, Micah passes on to speak of the desolation of Judah by the armies of Sennacherib. He tells us that many a city of the southern kingdom shall be besieged and taken by the Assyrian — Aphrah, and Saphir, and Zaanah, and Beth-ezel ; Maroth, Lachish, Moresheth-Gath, Achzib, and Mareshah ; names strange and uncouth to us, but well known to Micah as the names of towns that belonged to the land of his birth. It is difficult for English readers to understand the language of the prophet in this passage, because he constantly alludes to the meanings of the Hebrew names of the towns in question.

For instance, the first of them, Aphrah, or rather Beth-le-Aphrah, means, "House of Dust;" and Micah plays on the word, so to speak, and cries: "Roll in the dust, ye inhabitants of Dust-Town, for ye shall be brought low." At the risk, perhaps, of some appearance of irreverence, we shall endeavour to preserve this peculiarity in our paraphrase.

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, was often pleased to speak in dark sayings and difficult parables; and even in these latter days, with the added light of the New Testament, the wisest and best of his servants differ in their interpretation of many a prophetic utterance. There are not a few such places in Micah's short book. For example, Calvin and other learned and godly commentators look upon Micah ii. 12, 13, as a prophecy of judgment and ruin; they consider that the people were to be assembled in Jerusalem as sheep for the slaughter, and that "the breaker" is the enemy who was to destroy them. Others look upon this passage as a promise of deliverance, and regard "the breaker" as a deliverer who is to break through all opposition and lead the people back to Zion in triumph—a type, to say the least of it, of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In all such cases we shall adopt that view which seems to us to be most in accordance with the mind of the Spirit, without necessarily asserting that all other interpretations are wrong. Now may the good Lord be our guide, while we try to explain the first two chapters of this book, which seem to form a section complete in itself and terminating in Messiah's reign.

MICAH i, ii.

¹The word of the Lord that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. ²Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. ³For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. ⁴And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the

PARAPHRASE.

Unto Micah of Moresheth, in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, came the word of the Lord, a vision concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. Hear, all ye people! Hearken, O land, and all ye that dwell therein! The Lord God testifieth against you: he speaketh from his holy habitation. Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will come forth from heaven: I will come down in judgment, and overthrow the high places of the land, [its strong cities and the temples of its idols]. The mountains shall melt away before

fire, *and* as the waters *that are* poured down a steep place. ⁵For the transgression of Jacob *is* all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What *is* the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria? and what *are* the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem? ⁶Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, *and* as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. ⁷And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burned with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate; for she gathered *it* of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

⁸Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. ⁹For her wound *is* incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, *even* to Jerusalem. ¹⁰Declare ye *it* not at Gath, weep ye not at all; in the house of Aphrah roll thyself in the dust. ¹¹Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked: the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel; he shall receive of you his standing. ¹²For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good; but evil came down from the Lord unto the gate of Jerusalem. ¹³O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she *is* the be-

me as wax before the fire; the land shall shake and be cleft into valleys, as a torrent rushes down the mountain-side. [This figurative language foretells the calamities recorded in 2 Kings xvii. and xxv.] All this is the fruit of the transgression of my people, the fruit of the sin of the house of Jacob. Do ye ask, What is the transgression of Jacob? It is the wickedness of Samaria. Do ye ask, Where are the idol-temples of Judah? They fill Jerusalem. Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of stones, such as men gather in the field when they plant a vineyard. The columns of her palaces shall roll down into the valley, and their foundations shall be laid bare. Her graven images shall be broken to pieces: the wealth which she hath gotten by prostitution shall be burned: her idols shall be destroyed. By whoredom she hath obtained her wealth, and a nation of whoremongers shall inherit it. [It shall be given to the unclean Assyrians.]

Then said Micah, Woe is me for the evil which I foretell! I will lay aside my garments as one of the wretched captives of my people: I will wail as a jackal and mourn as an owl or an ostrich; for the wound of Samaria is beyond remedy. And, lo, the invader marches onward into the land of Judah, to the walls of the city of my people, to the gates of Jerusalem. [Fulfilled, 2 Kings xviii. 17.] Tell it not in Gath; let not your tears be seen there, lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice. Ye men of Dust-town, roll yourselves in the dust: ye that dwell at Fair-town, go ye into exile in nakedness and shame: ye that dwell at Flock-town shall be shut up so that ye shall no more flock out of your gates: the trouble of

ginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion : for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee. ¹⁴Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath : the houses of Achzib *shall be* a lie to the kings of Israel. ¹⁵Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Mareshah : he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel. ¹⁶Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children ; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle ; for they are gone into captivity from thee.

Neighbour-town shall make it a useless neighbour : the people of Bitter-town shall be bitterly deceived in their expectation of good : for the Lord hath sent the enemy to thunder at the gates of Jerusalem. Yokey your swift horses to your chariots and escape if ye can, ye men of Horseham. ["Lachish" and "horse" have a very similar sound in Hebrew.] Yours was the first city in Judah to lead Zion into sin ; for ye were the first to imitate the idolatries of Samaria. Gath's-Possession shall be a lost possession : the houses of Falseby shall be but a false prop for the house of David : the Lord will bring an heir to thee, O Heirton, for the king of Assyria shall be thine heir : and the glory of Israel, even its mighty men, shall flee to the cave of Adullam. Shave thine head, O Zion ; make thyself bald, O Jerusalem : mourn for the children in whom thou delightest : yea, make thyself bald as the bald-headed eagle, in mourning for thy children carried into captivity.

¹Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds ! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. ²And they covet fields and take *them* by violence ; and houses, and take *them* away : so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. ³Therefore thus saith the Lord ; Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks ; neither shall ye go haughtily : for this time *is* evil. ⁴In that day shall *one* take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, *and* say, We be utterly spoiled : he hath changed the portion of my people : how hath he removed it

Woe to the men who devise iniquity upon their beds, and plan evil works in the night-watches ; who rise at dawn to practise them to the utmost of their power ! They covet their neighbour's field, and seize it : they covet his house, and take it away : they oppress my people, and rob them of the inheritance of their fathers. Therefore thus saith the Lord : Behold, I prepare trouble for you, O house of Israel. I will put a yoke upon your neck which ye shall not be able to shake off, neither shall ye haughtily lift up your heads : for the times shall be evil. In that day ye shall be a by-word of derision to your enemies ; ye shall lament with a lamentation of

from me! turning away he hath divided our fields. ⁶Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the Lord. ⁶Prophesy ye not, *say they to them that prophesy*: they shall not prophesy to them, *that they shall not take shame.* ⁷*O thou that art named the house of Jacob*, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? *are these his doings?* do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? ⁸Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely as men averse from war. ⁹The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses; from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever. ¹⁰Arise ye, and depart; for this *is not your rest*: because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a sore destruction. ¹¹If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood do lie, *saying*, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

¹²I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the *multitude* of men. ¹³The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it: and their king shall pass before them,

lamentations, and shall say, The spoilers have utterly spoiled us; our inheritance is turned to others; how is it taken from us! Our fields are given to the transgressor. [The word translated in our Bible "turning away," should be translated, "to the rebellious," that is, to the Assyrian.] There shall be none left to divide the land by lot to the people of the Lord. Ye say unto the prophets, *Prophesy not*; therefore they shall no longer prophesy unto you to preserve you from infamy. O ye that call yourselves the house of Jacob, can ye, by silencing the prophets, defeat the Spirit of the Lord? Are not these calamities your own doings? Do not my words do good to all who walk uprightly? saith the Lord. But of late ye have filled the country with cruelty and violence. Such as travel peacefully through the land ye rob of their very garments. Ye drive the widows from their pleasant homes, and take away for ever from their children the heritage that I have given them. Arise therefore, and depart into exile; for ye shall no longer rest in the land which ye have polluted: it shall spew you out, as I have said. I will give you in judgment such prophets as ye have chosen, prophets who prophesy vanity and falsehood, and promise you abundance of wine and strong drink.

Yet in the latter days I will surely assemble all the seed of Jacob, and will surely gather together all the remnant of Israel. I will gather them together as the sheep of a rich pasture, as a flock in the midst of their fold: their bleating shall be as the voice of a mighty multitude. One shall go before them who shall break down all that oppose them: they shall break the bars of the city of their

and the Lord on the head of them. captivity, pass through its gates, and march on ; their king shall be their leader, and the Lord shall go before them.

The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it !

SEVENTEENTH HALF-HOUR.

MICAH iii., iv., v.

THE third, fourth, and fifth chapters of Micah form the second section of his book, distinct and complete like the first, and terminating like it in a prediction of the triumph of the church of God, and the overthrow of its enemies. A short summary of the contents of this section may help us to understand its various details.

First, the prophet, being consciously filled by the Spirit of God with power, discernment, and courage (see iii. 8), denounces the wickedness of the magistrates and the prophets, the civil and religious leaders of the people. He compares the judges to ravening wolves who devour the flock, cruel butchers who break their bones and chop them in pieces, ruthless shepherds who cut up the sheep for the caldron ; and he tells them that the time shall come when they themselves shall cry for mercy and shall not be heard. Then he turns to the false prophets and likens them to the beasts of prey, at war with all who do not feed them to the full ; these shall perish in darkness and confusion, for God will deal with them as he dealt with Saul, whom he answered neither by dreams nor by Urim. For the iniquity of such magistrates and such prophets Zion shall be overthrown, and its very site ploughed like a field by its triumphant foes. This threat of the prophet was long remembered in Jerusalem ; for we read that when Jeremiah's life was threatened by the angry priests and prophets, the princes and the people delivered him from death and justified his conduct by referring to this utterance of Micah. (See Jer. xxvi. 1—19.)

But through all these scenes of wickedness and judgment the prophet looks onward to the glorious kingdom of the

Messiah. In language which agrees almost word for word with a passage in Isaiah (compare Mic. iv. 1—3 with Isa. ii. 2—4), Micah foretells the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the going forth of that gospel which was to be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. [The question has been raised by theologians whether Micah copied Isaiah, or Isaiah Micah. We need not dwell upon it for a moment; for if we believe that these two holy men of God, whose ministries were in part contemporaneous, both received their messages from the mouth of God, in much the same way as did the child Samuel in the days of Eli, why should we be surprised that they used the same words to foretell the same blessings?] But meanwhile Zion must pass through the furnace of affliction; she must fall into the hands of the Chaldeans; her highest magistrates must be smitten on the cheek by their insulting conquerors; and her children must be carried captive to Babylon.

From the first promise given in Eden God had foretold with continually increasing clearness the coming of his Son; and Micah was commissioned to reveal the fact that the little village of Bethlehem should witness the birth of him who was to rule over Israel in the eternal future, and who had been his Father's equal in the eternal past. Such is the substance of the wonderful portion of Scripture, which we must now endeavour to paraphrase.

MICAH iii., iv., v.

¹ And I said, Hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; *Is it* not for you to know judgment? ² Who hate the good, and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones; ³ who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them; and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. ⁴ Then shall they cry unto the Lord, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings.

PARAPHRASE.

Moreover, I said, Hear my words, I beseech you, ye princes of the house of Jacob, ye rulers of Israel: ought ye not to know how to judge righteous judgment? But ye hate good and love evil. Ye tear away both fleece and skin; yea, the flesh from the bones of the sheep. Ye devour the Lord's flock; ye flay them, and break their bones; ye chop them up as meat for the seething-pot and flesh for the caldron. Therefore the day cometh when ye shall cry to the Lord, and he will not answer; yea, he will hide his face from you, and ye shall reap the reward of your evil deeds.

⁵ Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. ⁶ Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. ⁷ Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for *there is* no answer of God.

⁸ But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. ⁹ Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. ¹⁰ They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. ¹¹ The heads thereof judge for reward, the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, *Is not* the Lord among us? none evil can come upon us. ¹² Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

¹ But in the last days it shall come to pass, *that* the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow

Thus saith the Lord unto you, ye prophets, who deceive his people; who inwardly are ravening wolves, and with your lips cry peace; and if a man feed you not to the full, ye make war upon him: behold, night shall overtake you, and your visions shall cease; darkness shall come upon you, and your divination shall end. The sun shall set upon lying prophets, and their noon shall be darkened; the seers shall be ashamed, the diviners confounded; yea, they shall be dumb with despair, for God shall be silent unto them.

But truly the Spirit of the Lord hath filled me with power, and wisdom, and strength, that I may show their transgressions to the sons of Jacob, their sins to the house of Israel. Hearken, I beseech you, ye princes of the house of Jacob, ye rulers of the house of Israel, ye that hate justice, and make void the law by unjust judgments, building the streets of Zion by bloody oppression, and the palaces of Jerusalem with the wages of iniquity. The judges sell their judgments for bribes, the priests teach false doctrine for hire, and the prophets prophesy lies for money. Yet they rely on the protection of the God of Israel, and say, The Lord is with us, and we have nothing to fear. Therefore the Lord will give up Zion to its enemies, and they shall plough up its site like a field; they shall make Jerusalem a heap of ruins; and the temple-mount shall be as a lone hill in a forest.

Yet it shall come to pass in after days, saith the Lord, that the mountain of my house shall be the highest of all mountains, and my hill shall be exalted above all hills; and unto it shall the

unto it. ²And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. ³And he shall judge among the people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. ⁴But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make *them* afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken *it*. ⁵For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

⁶In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; ⁷And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. ⁸And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

⁹Now why dost thou cry out

gathering of the people be. And many nations shall assemble themselves and shall say, Come, let us go up to the temple of the Lord, to the dwelling-place of the God of Jacob: he will make known to us his will, and we will walk in his statutes; for he shall send forth the sceptre of his strength out of Zion, the word of his grace from Jerusalem [and shall endure his messengers with power from on high]. He shall establish righteousness among the peoples of the earth, and convince and convert mighty nations that are far off. Then they who have loved war shall learn to delight in peace, beating their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks. Nation shall not rise up against nation; the art of war shall be forgotten. Every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig-tree in quiet and security: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. For the peoples who know not God trust in lords many and gods many; but we will trust in the Lord our God, and will dwell under his shadow for ever and ever.

In that day, saith the Lord, I will assemble my halting sheep and gather together my scattered flock, my people whom I have afflicted for their sins; and I will make my halting ones a revived remnant, and my scattered ones a strong nation; and I the Lord will reign over them in Zion thenceforth for ever. And unto thee, O stronghold of the flock of God, O hill of Zion's virgin city, unto thee shall come dominion, yea, thine ancient dominion; for I will again establish the throne of David, and again build Jerusalem.

And yet meanwhile ye shall

aloud? *is there* no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. ¹⁰Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go *even* to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.

¹¹Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. ¹²But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

¹³Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth. ¹Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

²But thou, Beth-lehem Ephraim, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting. ³Therefore will he give them up, until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant

have sorrow, and shall cry aloud. Thy king shall be cut off, and thy counsellors shall perish, and the birth-pangs of tribulation shall take hold on thee. [See 2 Kings xxv., verses 6, 7, 18—21.] Ye shall be driven out of the city, ye shall be scattered abroad, ye shall be brought to Babylon; and there shall the Lord turn again your captivity and redeem you from your enemies. Now that I am angry with thee, the heathen gather together against thee, and say, We will defile Zion, and our eyes shall gaze upon her overthrow. They know not the designs of the Lord, neither do they understand his counsels. They know not that the Lord hath gathered them together for destruction, even as sheaves are gathered to the floor to be threshed. Thou shalt arise, O Zion, and destroy thy foes; thou shalt push them as with iron horns, and trample them as with brazen hoofs; thou shalt conquer many nations, and shalt devote the spoils of thy wars to Jehovah, the wealth of thy foes to the Lord of the whole earth. But first thou must have tribulation for thy sins: thou shalt be filled with tumult, thou tumultuous city; the enemy shall lay siege to thee, and shall smite thy princes with the rod of insult. [Often fulfilled to the letter by the captors of Jerusalem; see Lam. iv. 20, and v. 8, 12.]

But thou, Bethlehem Ephraim (Gen. xxxv. 19), though thou be of little account among the townships of Judah, shalt bring forth unto me one who shall be Governor in Israel; one whose power hath wrought from of old, from everlasting. The Lord will give up the seed of Jacob unto darkness until he

of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. ⁴And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. ⁵And this *man* shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land; and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. ⁶And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver *us* from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders. ⁷And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. ⁸And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. ⁹Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

¹⁰And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots: ¹¹And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and

come, born in due season of the virgin that shall travail with child; and then the remnant of Judah and the remnant of Israel shall return together unto the Lord their God. And he shall stand, the great, good Shepherd, and shall feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, glorious with the glory of the Lord his God: his flock shall abide in safety everlasting; for their Shepherd shall be great in all the earth, and he shall be their peace. The Assyrian must invade our land and enter into our palaces; but seven princes shall stand up to defend us, yea, more than seven to deliver us. [God will send us abundance of help in every time of trial.] And the land of Assyria shall be ravaged with the sword, and the gates of its cities shall be broken open; God shall deliver us from the Assyrian when he marcheth against our land and invadeth our inheritance. And the remnant of Jacob shall yet be a blessing to all nations, as the dew that cometh from heaven, as the showers that water the earth, which man cannot hinder nor the sons of man command. Yea, the remnant of Jacob shall be mighty among the nations, irresistible among the peoples, as a lion among beasts, or a young lion among sheep; even as a lion which passeth through, treadeth down, teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. So let thine hand be lifted up against thine adversaries, O Lord, and let all thine enemies be cut off.

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that my people shall trust in me alone; for I will cut off their horses out of the midst of them, and will destroy their chariots: I will

throw down all thy strong holds :
¹² And I will cut off witchcrafts out
 of thine hand ; and thou shalt
 have no *more* soothsayers : ¹³ thy
 graven images also will I cut off,
 and thy standing images out of
 the midst of thee ; and thou shalt
 no more worship the work of thine
 hands. ¹⁴ And I will pluck up thy
 groves out of the midst of thee :
 so will I destroy thy cities. ¹⁵ And
 I will execute vengeance in anger
 and fury upon the heathen, such
 as they have not heard.

bring down the fenced cities of
 the land, and destroy its strong-
 holds : I will put an end to its
 sorceries and cut off its sooth-
 sayers : I will abolish its graven
 images and the shrines of its
 idols : and my people shall no
 longer worship the work of their
 own hands. I will pluck up the
 images of thy false gods out of
 the midst of thee, and thou shalt
 no longer trust in thy fenced
 cities. But upon the nations
 which obey me not I will pour out
 my fury and execute my righteous
 judgments.

What his mouth hath spoken, his hand accomplisheth.

EIGHTEENTH HALF-HOUR.

MICAH vi., vii.

THE remaining chapters of Micah may be thus summarised :

I. The Lord condescends to plead his own cause against Israel (vi. 1—8). He calls upon the mountains of the land of promise, which had stood as dumb witnesses throughout the ages, like the stone of Joshua (Josh. xxiv. 27), and had seen the dealings of God with Israel, and their evil requital of his goodness. These everlasting hills are summoned to bear testimony to the righteousness and kindness of all his actions, and the justice of all his demands. In their presence he asks the nation : What evil have I done to you, and what have I required of you but to walk before me in justice, charity, and humility ?

II. Then the Lord cries to Jerusalem in words of severe reproof, and threatens it with just judgments. The treasures which have been heaped up by dishonest tradesmen and tyrannical nobles shall be given to others. The Chaldeans shall take away corn, wine, and oil from a people who have kept the statutes of Omri and followed the example of the house of Ahab. [Read 1 Kings xvii. 23—33.]

III. The prophet, speaking in the name of the godly

remnant yet found in Judah, cries, Woe is me ! The saints are gathered home to heaven, and the wicked walk on every side. The princes are greedy of gifts, the judges take bribes, the great men of the land are bent on mischief, the most virtuous people of the day are but briars and thorns, friends are not to be trusted, and the closest family ties are no safeguard against treacherous persecution.

IV. What are the faithful to do in times so evil ? Shall they despair ? No : the God of their salvation remains unchanged and unchangeable. They resolve to wait upon him, to confess their sins, to submit to his chastisements. In due season he will arise for their help, will overthrow their enemies, will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea ; in short, all the promises given to the fathers shall be made good in the person, work, and reign of Jesus Christ.

In chapter vi. we have another illustration of the fact that the ablest and sincerest of commentators sometimes arrive at very different conclusions. Good Dr. Gill considers that verses 6, 7, and 8 are the substance of a dialogue between Balak and Balaam. With all due deference to Dr. Gill's learning and spiritual knowledge, we think he has adopted here a very far-fetched interpretation which cannot be upheld. Our own view, as given in the following paraphrase, is in agreement with that of Calvin, and we think that most of our readers will consider it satisfactory.

MICAH vi., vii.

¹Hear ye now what the Lord saith ; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. ²Hear ye, O mountains, the Lord's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth : for the Lord hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. ³O my people, what have I done unto thee ? and wherein have I wearied thee ? testify against me. ⁴For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants ; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor

PARAPHRASE.

Hearken, O Israel, to the message which I bring you from your God : he bids me arise and plead his cause in the hearing of the mountains of the land, which have witnessed all his righteousness and all your wickedness. [Compare Josh. xxiv. 27.] Hear, ye mountains ; give ear, ye everlasting hills : listen ye to what the Lord hath to say on his own behalf against his people. For the Lord hath a quarrel with the sons of Jacob, and will plead his cause against them. O my people, what wrong have I done thee ? What yoke of oppression have I laid upon thee ? If ye have aught against me, speak !

answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord.

⁶ Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, *and* bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, *or* with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born *for* my transgression, the fruit of my body *for* the sin of my soul? ⁸ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

⁹ The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and *the man of wisdom* shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it.

¹⁰ Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure *that is* abominable? ¹¹ Shall I count *them* pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? ¹² For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lies, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. ¹³ Therefore also will I make *thee* sick in smiting thee, in making *thee* desolate because of thy sins. ¹⁴ Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied; and thy

But I have loaded you with benefits: for I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and delivered you from the house of bondage, by the hand of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember the devices of Balak to curse thee, and the blessing which I put into the lips of Balaam: remember how I brought thee from the Shittim of thy sin and shame to the Gilgal which thou didst adorn with stones of triumph from the bed of Jordan. [Read Numb. xxv. 1—3, and Josh. iv. 19, 20.] So shalt thou confess that righteousness belongeth unto me. And dost thou now ask what sacrifices thou shalt bring unto the Lord, with what rites thou must propitiate the Most High? With burnt-offerings of calves, with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil, with the life of thy firstborn, or the blood of thine offspring? Nay but, O man, I have shown thee what is good: what have I asked of thee in my holy statutes but to do deeds of justice, to live the life of charity, and to humble thy proud heart to walk with me?

The Lord crieth aloud to Jerusalem, and the children of wisdom will acknowledge his voice and the majesty thereof. His rod is lifted up; bow ye to the chastisement which he sendeth. Doth the wicked yet retain the treasure wherewith his wickedness hath filled his house, and the false measure which the Lord hateth? How can he be accounted innocent, while he useth unjust balances and deceitful weights? The rich men of the city practise oppression continually; the people thereof speak lies; in their mouth dwelleth a deceitful tongue. Therefore I the Lord will smite thee sore, O Jerusalem, and will

casting down *shall be* in the midst of thee; and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver; and *that* which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. ¹⁵Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine. ¹⁶For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels; that I should make thee a desolation, and the inhabitants thereof an hissing: therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

¹Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage: *there is* no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit. ²The good *man* is perished out of the earth: and *there is* none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his brother with a net. ³That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge *asketh* for a reward; and the great *man*, he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. ⁴The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is *sharper* than a thorn hedge: the day of thy watchmen *and* thy visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. ⁵Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. ⁶For

make thee desolate because of thy sins. Thou shalt eat, but thy food shall not satisfy thine hunger; the hand of the oppressor shall rest heavily upon thee; thou shalt seek to deliver that which is dear to thee, but shalt not carry it away safely: and even what thou carriest away shall be given up to the sword. Thou shalt sow, but others shall reap thy fields; thou shalt tread thine olives, but others shall anoint themselves with the oil; thou shalt tread thy grapes, but others shall drink the wine. [For fulfilment see 2 Kings xxv. 12, and Neh. ix. 36, 37.] For ye keep the statutes of Omri, and work the evil works of his son Ahab, and walk after the counsels of their wicked house. Therefore will I make Jerusalem a desolation, and its inhabitants a derision; and my people shall endure the scorn due to those who break my covenant.

Woe is me! The summer fruits have been gathered, and the grapes have been stripped from the vines: the first-ripe figs are gone, and my soul desireth them in vain. Yea the godly have been taken from the evil to come, and there are no upright men left in the land. All lie in wait for blood; every one hunteth for his brother's life. They work evil diligently with both hands. The prince is covetous; the judges sell justice for bribes; the rich man conceiveth mischief and uttereth it: and they all weave together the web of wickedness. The best in the land are but briars, the most upright are but brambles. Therefore the day cometh when thy watchmen shall be punished and thy people shall be visited with judgment: despair shall seize upon them. The land is full of deceit: none can trust

the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies *are* the men of his own house.

⁷ Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. ⁸ Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord *shall be* a light unto me. ⁹ I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, *and* I shall behold his righteousness.

¹⁰ Then *she that is* mine enemy shall see *it*, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. ¹¹ *In* the day that thy walls are to be built, *in* that day shall the decree be far removed.

¹² *In* that day *also* he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and *from* the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and *from* mountain to mountain. ¹³ Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

¹⁴ Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as in

in a friend; none can trust in a guide; none can speak freely to the wife of his bosom. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter betrayeth her mother, the daughter-in-law her mother-in-law; a man finds his enemies in his own household.

But Zion shall say, I will look unto the Lord, and wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear my cry. Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I fall, I shall rise again; though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be my light. Because I have sinned against him, therefore will I bear his chastising, until he pardon and deliver, and execute judgment upon my foes. He will bring me again into the light of his countenance, and I shall behold his just salvation. Then shall mine enemy see his hand, and shall be covered with shame; even she who said unto me, Where is the Lord thy God? I shall see her overthrow in the day when she shall be trodden down by her foes as the mire in the streets. The day shall come, O Zion, when thy walls shall be rebuilt, and all hindrances shall then be removed out of the way. Then shall thine exiles return to thee from Assyria, from Egypt, from all parts between the river of Egypt and the river Euphrates, between sea and sea, between mountain and mountain. But first my threatened judgments must come upon thee; the land must be made a desolation because of the wickedness of the people, and they must eat of the fruit of their doings.

Then said Micah, Ah, Lord! Be thou again the Shepherd of thy people, and feed the flock of thine own inheritance; for they are scattered in the woods and

the days of old. ¹⁵ According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous *things*. ¹⁶ The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay *their* hand upon *their* mouth, their ears shall be deaf. ¹⁷ They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee.

¹⁸ Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. ¹⁹ He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. ²⁰ Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, *and* the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

lost upon the mountains. Cause them to dwell safely in the rich pastures of Bashan and Gilead as in the days of old. And the Lord said: I will do wondrous things for my people, as in the day when I brought them up out of the land of Egypt. The heathen shall see, and shall find with shame that all their might is useless: they shall be dumb before my presence, and their ears shall be deafened with the voice of my thunder. They shall be brought low, as serpents that lick the dust, as worms that creep forth in terror from their holes. They shall submit themselves with fear unto the God of Israel, and shall be afraid because of him.

Who *is* like unto thee, O God, pardoning iniquity, and passing by the transgression of the remnant of thine heritage? Thou retainest not thine anger for ever, because thou delightest *in* mercy. Thou wilt turn unto us again in thy compassion; thou wilt trample our iniquities under thy feet; thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform thy word unto Jacob, the mercy which thou didst promise unto Abraham, the oath which thou swarest unto our fathers in the days of old.

In the latter day the zeal of the Lord of hosts hath accomplished it; for in the fulness of time he hath sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. In him is the glory of the Lord revealed.

NINETEENTH HALF-HOUR.

NAHUM.

WE have said that the repentance brought about by Jonah's visit to Nineveh prolonged the existence of that city for a century, and that the subsequent prophecy of its destruction uttered by God's servant Nahum was probably fulfilled without further delay. It is, however, quite possible that more than a century intervened between the two prophets, and that some further respite was granted to the "bloody city" even after the sentence pronounced upon it by Nahum. But at length the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. Ezekiel pointed to Nineveh's greatness and ruin as a warning to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. [Read Ezek. xxxi.]

Assyria was often used by the Lord as the rod of his anger to chasten his rebellious people. [See Isa. vii. 18; viii. 7; x. 5, 6.] But when the chastisement had been inflicted, the rod was thrown away. The Lord had said by Isaiah: "It shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

There was much to feed the Assyrian's pride, and the hardness of his heart made him more cruel than the grave. His victorious armies spread destruction far and wide, and filled his coffers with gold, his palaces with the spoils of war. His hundred-gated city was as a lair of wild beasts, where lion-like nobles, with spouses haughty and cruel as lionesses, reared their children like lions' cubs in security. He subdued nations, sacked cities, gathered the riches of the people as one gathereth eggs, yea, gathered all the earth (Isa. x. 14). The stone pictures which have been brought to England from his unearthed palaces show how he trampled on captive kings, and made their subjects prisoners; how he bored out their eyes, flayed them alive, impaled them on stakes to die in lingering agony. Well might Nahum cry: "Woe to the bloody city! Woe to the lions who strangle their quarry for their lionesses, tear it in pieces for their whelps, and fill their caves with prey and their dens with ravin!"

Nineveh had had proof enough that the Lord was slow to anger: it remained for her to prove that he hath his way in

the whirlwind and the storm, and that the clouds are the dust of his feet. Commissioned by him, though they themselves knew it not, the Medes and Babylonians compassed the doomed harlot with their red-shielded warriors and their scarlet-coated captains; their mantelets, like moving fortresses, approached her walls and covered the battering rams that thundered at her gates; their polished lance-blades flashed terror in her face, and their burnished chariots gleamed and roared along her streets.

Nahum, prophesying probably in the reign of Hezekiah, when Assyria's power was feared and felt, saw all this in the light of the revelation which God gave unto him of things that must then shortly come to pass. In his first chapter he magnifies the righteous vengeance of a long-suffering God, and threatens Sennacherib and his city with punishment: in his second chapter he describes the sack of Nineveh as if it were already in progress before his eyes; in the third he utters further words of reproof and condemnation, and with terrible irony bids the city prepare for the siege which shall bring down its warriors into the sleep of death.

NAHUM i. ii. iii.

¹The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

²God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.

³The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit *the wicked*: the Lord *hath* his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. ⁴He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

⁵The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

⁶Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the

PARAPHRASE.

The burden of the word of the Lord upon Nineveh; the book of the revelation which God gave to Nahum of Elkosh.

The Lord is a jealous God, an avenger of evil: the Lord avengeth, and his wrath overfloweth: the Lord avengeth himself on his enemies, and forgetteth not to requite those who hate him. The Lord is slow to anger; but he is great in power and just in judgment. The Lord plants his footsteps in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust raised by his feet. His rebuke drieth up the sea, and the rivers that flow into it. Then the pastures of Bashan, the vineyards of Carmel, the cedars of Lebanon, wither and die. The mountains tremble before him, and the hills melt away. The earth is moved; yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who

fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. ⁷The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him. ⁸But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

⁹What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. ¹⁰For while *they be* folden together *as* thorns, and while they are drunken *as* drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. ¹¹There is *one* come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor. ¹²Thus saith the Lord; Though *they be* quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. ¹³For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. ¹⁴And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, *that* no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile. ¹⁵Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

then can stand before his indignation, and who shall abide the day of his anger? His holy wrath is as a flood of fire: his power rends the rocks asunder. His people prove his goodness, and find him to be a refuge in the day of trouble; they flee to him for shelter, and he owneth them. But with an overwhelming flood will he swallow up the foundations of Nineveh, and will drive away the wicked into darkness.

How do ye think to defy the Lord? He will utterly consume you with one blow of his hand. Though thy warriors be as a rampart of thorns, though they be like thorns which are soaked in water even as thy men are soaked in drink, yet shall they be burned up as dry stubble in fiery flame. Thy king cometh forth and blasphemeth the living God. [Isa. xxxvii. 17.] He is an evil counsellor. But thus saith the Lord unto him: Though thy hosts be strong and thy legions many, they shall be cut down as the grass, and thou shalt pass away; once for all and once for ever will I strike thee down. And now, O Judah, I will break the yoke of the Assyrian from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds. But as for thee, O Assyrian, I have given commandment concerning thee that thy posterity shall be cut off. Thy graven images and thy molten images will I destroy out of the temple of thy gods; and there will I bring thee to thy grave, for thou art vile. [See Isa. xxxvii. 37, 38.] Lo, yonder upon the mountains runneth the messenger who beareth to Zion the glad tidings of thy fall, and publisheth peace to Jerusalem, saying: Keep ye your feasts in safety now, ye men of Judah, and perform your vows in security: for the oppressor

¹He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make *thy* loins strong, fortify *thy* power mightily. ²For the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. ³The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men *are* in scarlet: the chariots *shall be* with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. ⁴The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. ⁵He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. ⁶The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved. ⁷And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead *her* as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts. ⁸But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, *shall they cry*: but none shall look back. ⁹Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for *there is* none end of the store *and* glory out of all the pleasant furniture. ¹⁰She is empty and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain *is* in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

¹¹Where *is* the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion, *even* the old lion, walked, *and* the lion's

shall no more pass through your land; he is perished for ever.

Behold before thy walls, O Nineveh, the armies of the destroyer! Keep thy forts, guard thy roads, gird up thy loins, and struggle for thy life! For the Lord fighteth against thee, that he may restore the glory of Jacob, yea, the glory of his people Israel, whom ye have robbed and ruined. Thy foe hath reddened the shields of his mighty men, and clothed his heroes in scarlet. His preparations are complete: his burnished chariots flash in the sunlight, and his lancers shake terribly their firwood lances. The chariots rage along thy streets and crowd thy squares, bright as torches and swift as lightning. Thy king musters his champions, but they stumble in their march. They hasten to the walls, and gaze therefrom on advancing mantelets. The river is drained, and the city gates which its waters shielded are forced. The palace is ruined; the queen is dishonoured and carried captive, while her handmaids mourn like doves and beat their bosoms in despair. Though Nineveh hath been from of old filled with citizens as a pool is filled with water, yet now they flee before their enemies: the captains cry, Stand! stand! but the men look not back. Let the conquerors load themselves with spoil of silver and spoil of gold; there are treasures without end, costly furniture in abundance. But now is Nineveh to be made empty, and void, and waste: every heart melts, all knees smite together, all loins are filled with anguish, all faces wax pale.

Where now is the lair of the lions, the feeding-place of their young? the den where the lion and the lioness walked and reared

whelp, and none made *them* afraid? ¹²The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. ¹³Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

¹Woe to the bloody city! it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not; ²the noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. ³The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and *there is* a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and *there is* none end of *their* corpses; they stumble upon their corpses: ⁴because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. ⁵Behold, I *am* against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. ⁶And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock. ⁷And it shall come to pass, *that* all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

⁸Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, *that had* the waters round about it, whose rampart *was* the sea, and her wall *was* from the sea? ⁹Ethiopia and Egypt *were*

their whelps, safe and undisturbed? The lion tore his quarry to pieces for his cubs, strangled it for his lionesses, filled his caves with prey and his dens with ravin. Behold, it is my hand that is lifted up against thee, saith the Lord: I will burn thy chariots with fire, and will give thy young to the sword; I will cut off thy marauding armies, and the voice of thy haughty heralds shall spread dismay no more.

Woe to the city of blood, the city of deceit, the city of violence, which holdeth fast its hoards of spoil! [Listen! The Medes and Chaldeans have stormed thy walls and are within thy gates!] The noise of the whip! The roar and rattle of wheels! The horses rear, the chariots bound, the riders charge, the sword flashes, the spear glitters! Heaps on heaps of slain, heaps on heaps of carcases! Corpses choke the streets, corpses without end; the slayers stumble over them. It is the day of the Lord's vengeance on the multitude of thy whoredoms, thou well-favoured harlot, thou mistress of magic, who enslavest the nations with thy whoredom and the tribes of the earth with thy witchcraft. Behold, my hand is against thee, saith the Lord: I will cover thee with dishonour; I will show the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. Thou shalt be pilloried and made vile, the world's gazingstock. All that see thy ruin shall stand afar off and say, Nineveh is become a desolation: there is none to pity, and she hath no comforter.

Remember the fall of No-Amon, O Nineveh! Art thou greater than she? She was planted among the rivers and compassed about with their waters. Her rampart was the Nile, and her wall was its

her strength, and *it was* infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers. ¹⁰ Yet *was* she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

¹¹ Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. ¹² All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the firstripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. ¹³ Behold, thy people in the midst of thee *are* women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

¹⁴ Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strongholds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln. ¹⁵ There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. ¹⁶ Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and fleeth away. ¹⁷ Thy crowned *are* as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, *but* when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they *are*. ¹⁸ Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell *in the dust*: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth *them*. ¹⁹ There

mighty stream. The countless legions of Ethiopia and Egypt were at her beck, the Mauritians were her spearmen, and the Libyans her infantry. Yet was she taken and carried captive: her babes were dashed in pieces at the corners of all her streets; her conquerors cast lots for her captured nobles, and bound her princes with chains. [No-Amon is supposed to be Thebes, in Upper Egypt, whose ruins fill the traveller with wonder.]

Thou also shalt drink of the cup, O Nineveh: thou shalt sink into darkness; in vain shalt thou seek a refuge from the face of thy foes. Thy forts shall be as the first-ripe figs upon the fig-trees, which, when the bough is shaken, fall into the mouth of the eater. Behold, thy warriors shall flee like women. Thy gates shall be thrown wide open to thine enemies, and thy bars shall be burned with fire.

Prepare thee for the siege! Fill thy cisterns, strengthen thy towers; dig thy clay, mould thy bricks, and heat thy kilns, that thou mayest strengthen thy walls! But within thy walls shall the fire devour thee; the edge of the sword shall slay thee; thy foes shall crush thee as the caterpillar. In vain shall thy streets swarm with men as with caterpillars and with soldiers as with locusts. Thy traders are more than the stars of heaven; but they shall be as the locusts which spread their wings and fly away. Thy princes are as locusts and thine officers as swarms of grasshoppers which lodge in the walls before the day is hot, but when the sun is risen flee away and are found no more. O king of Assyria, thy generals sleep the sleep of death, thy heroes slumber in the grave; thy people are

is no healing of thy bruise ; thy wound is grievous : all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee : for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually ?

scattered on the mountains, and there is none to recall them. Thy hurt cannot be healed, and thy wound is unto death. All who hear the sound of thy fall rejoice ; for what nation is there that thy wickedness hath not oppressed continually ?

Some of the sculptures found at Nineveh perished when exposed to the air : they had been calcined in the flames which the prophet foresaw !

TWENTIETH HALF-HOUR.

HABAKKUK i., ii.

THE prophet Habakkuk lived in evil days. Like Lot in Sodom he vexed his righteous soul from day to day with the lawless deeds which were done before his eyes. The streets of Jerusalem were filled with iniquity and outrage ; its houses were never safe from robbery and violence ; and when the injured carried their complaints to the courts of law, the devices of the wicked prevailed over the innocence of the righteous, and the judges deliberately gave sentence in favour of evil-doers. Worst of all, the Lord seemed to have closed his ear against the cry of the godly remnant who looked to him for help. " We cry," said they, " and thou wilt not hear : we call to thee for deliverance from our oppressors, and thou wilt not save."

There are various reasons for supposing that Habakkuk prophesied in the reign of Jehoiakim ; and the above picture of the times, which we have taken from the prophet's own words (i. 2—4), agrees well with the days of the godless king who burned the roll which Jeremiah had written at the command of the Lord. [See Jer. xxxvi. 1, 2, 3, 22, 23.] The corruption of the nation was past reproof, and past all remedy ; and the Lord's silence meant impending judgment. He was saying within his heart : " Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies : I will turn my hand upon Jerusalem, and purely purge away her dross, and take away all her tin. The destruction of the transgressors and of

the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake me shall be consumed." [Read Isa. i. 21—31.]

But at length, in answer to the prophet's cries, the Lord speaks. He tells him that the days of vengeance are at hand, and gives him this message for the rebellious city: "I work a work in your days which ye will not believe though I forewarn you of it. Nineveh is fallen, it is true, and your old enemies the Assyrians are overthrown for ever: but the Chaldeans who have conquered them are the nation which I have raised up to chastise you. They shall come from distant Babylon: their cavalry shall swoop down upon your country as the eagle upon her prey: they shall scoff at your king, and your princes shall make sport for them. They shall laugh at the fortifications of your cities, overtop them with their earthworks, and enter in bloody triumph."

On receiving this terrible answer the prophet pleads further with his God. "Thou wilt not utterly destroy us: but how canst thou suffer the vile Chaldean to devour thy people, to catch them in the meshes of his power as fishers sweep the shoals of fish into the meshes of their nets? Shall Babylon harry the nations for ever? I wait, Lord, till thou answer my complaint."

Again the Lord replies: "Lo, I will show thee; and do thou write the vision plainly, and make it known. It will surely be fulfilled at the appointed time without further delay. The righteous, who put their trust in me, shall outlive the awful storm; but the Chaldean wine-bibber, proud, ambitious, extortionate, covetous, lascivious, and idolatrous, shall find that he has laboured for the fire, and built his mighty city for destruction. The nations of the world shall rejoice when they see the vengeance, and the overthrow of Babylon shall fill the earth with the knowledge of the righteousness of God as the waters fill the ocean: for the Lord, who is greatly to be feared, dwelleth in Zion."

Such is the substance of the first part of this wonderful prophecy. Its fulfilment is recorded by Daniel (v. 30, 31). Let us now turn to the delicate and difficult task of paraphrasing it.

HABAKKUK i., ii.

¹The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

PARAPHRASE.

The burden of the Lord which was revealed to the prophet Habakkuk.

²O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! *even* cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! ³Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause *me* to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence *are* before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention. ⁴Therefore the law is slack, and judgment doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

⁵Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for *I* will work a work in your days, *which* ye will not believe, though it be told *you*. ⁶For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, *that* bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places *that are* not their's. ⁷They *are* terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. ⁸Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far; they shall fly as the eagle *that* hasteth to eat. ⁹They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up *as* the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity *as* the sand. ¹⁰And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold; for they shall heap dust, and take it. ¹¹Then shall *his* mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, *imputing* this his power unto his god.

How long, O Lord? I cry unto thee, but thou hearest not; I complain to thee of violence, but thou savest not. Why must I behold these scenes of vice, and look upon the crimes of the wicked? Day by day I witness robbery and violence; and hence ariseth strife and contention. The law is powerless, and justice is paralysed: for the wicked prevaileth over the righteous, and the judges judge unjustly.

Behold, the hosts of the heathen shall bring my answer, saith the Lord: look ye, and wonder, and be confounded, ye workers of iniquity. In your own times and speedily will I bring my judgment upon you; but though I tell you, ye will not believe till it cometh. Lo, for this purpose have I raised up the Chaldeans. They are cruel and furious; their hordes run far and wide to dispossess the nations of their homes. Terrible is their might, and dreadful their cruelty; they obey no law but their own, and from their majesty there is no appeal. Their war-horses are swifter than leopards and fiercer than hungry wolves. Their cavalry scour the land; no distance can shelter from their pursuit; they are swift as the eagle that hasteth to her prey. They come not to conquer, but to destroy. With stern faces they rush onward like the east wind, and gather together prisoners as the sand upon the sea-shore. They scoff at kings, and hold nobles in derision. They laugh at the gates and walls of the strong city; for they heap up mounds and take it. Yet they shall be as a wind that passeth by; they shall transgress and be found guilty: for their own might is the god that they worship.

¹² *Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? we shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction.*

¹³ *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?*

¹⁴ *And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them?*

¹⁵ *They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.*

¹⁶ *Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag; because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous.*

¹⁷ *Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?*

¹ *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.*

² *And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.*

³ *For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.*

⁴ *Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.*

But thou, O Lord my God, mine Holy One, art the same from everlasting: therefore we shall not be utterly cut off. Thou hast ordained the Chaldean to execute thy judgment, and hast raised him up to chastise thy people. [Thou art righteous; yet let me plead with thee concerning thy judgments (Jer. xii. 1.)] Why dost thou whose eyes are too pure to behold sin, thou who art too righteous to approve of injustice, look on while our foes deal treacherously with us? Why holdest thou thy peace while the wicked devour a nation more righteous than themselves? Why sufferest thou that they should catch men as the fishes of the sea, as the shoals of creeping things that are carried hither and thither by its waters? The Chaldean casteth his hook, he catcheth all nations in his net, he gathereth them in his drag. He rejoiceth in his victories, and exulteth over his spoils. Therefore he worshippeth his own power, and burneth incense to the drag-net of his own might; for thereby he getteth rich spoil and abundant prey. Shall he always empty his net in triumph? Shall he never cease to harry the nations?

Such is my complaint: what will the Lord answer? I wait, as a watchman on his watch-tower, to see what he will say to me. And lo! thus saith the answer of God unto me: Write upon tablets the vision which I now give thee; and make it plain, that all may read it with ease. Yet a little longer, and the appointed time shall come when my words shall be fulfilled: the vision hasteth to its end, and shall not prove false. Though it tarry, wait for its fulfilment: it shall surely be accomplished in due season. Behold,

Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he is a proud man*, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and *is as death*, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people: ⁶shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say,

⁶Woe to him that increaseth *that which is not his*! how long? and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay! ⁷Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? ⁸Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee; because of men's blood, and *for the violence of the land*, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

⁹Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil! ¹⁰Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many people, and hast sinned *against* thy soul. ¹¹For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it.

¹²Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity! ¹³Behold, *is it not of the Lord of hosts that*

the Chaldean's soul is lifted up with pride, and there is no uprightness in him: but the just who believeth in me shall live. The foe is inflamed by drunkenness and pride, and his home cannot content or contain him; he is greedy as the grave, and insatiable as death. He seeketh to subdue all nations, and to despoil all the peoples of the earth; but the time cometh when all nations shall laugh him to scorn, and make him the butt of their sarcasm. They shall say:

Woe to him that groweth rich by robbery; for his time is short; to him that loadeth himself with the wealth of others. Suddenly shall foes [the Medes and Persians] arise to devour thee; suddenly shall they awake to wrest thy prey from thee, and thou shalt be a prey to them. Thou hast spoiled many; therefore shall many spoil thee; upon thine own head shall be the blood that thou hast spilt, and the violence that thou hast done to Judæa, and to Jerusalem, and to all the inhabitants thereof. [Fulfilled Dan. v. 30, 31.]

Woe to him that getteth unto his house a gain which shall be its curse, seeking to build his nest on high, and to secure himself from all evil. [See Dan. iv. 30.] Thou hast planned the overthrow of many peoples, but in so doing thou hast planned the ruin of thine own house, and hast sinned against thine own soul. Thy palaces have been built at the cost of men's lives: but the stones of their walls shall proclaim thy guilt, and the beams of their timber shall cry for vengeance.

Woe to him that buildeth his city with the blood of prisoners, and foundeth its walls in oppression. Behold, it is the counsel

the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity? ¹⁴ For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

¹⁵ Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to *him*, and maketh *him* drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness! ¹⁶ Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy fore-skin be uncovered: the cup of the Lord's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing *shall be* on thy glory. ¹⁷ For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts, *which* made them afraid, because of men's blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein.

¹⁸ What profiteth the graven image that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work trusteth therein, to make dumb idols? ¹⁹ Woe unto him that saith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach! Behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and *there is* no breath at all in the midst of it.

²⁰ But the Lord *is* in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

The magnificent psalm which closes this prophecy may well claim a Half-Hour for itself.

of the Lord of hosts that ye shall build for the fire and spend your strength for nought. The glory of the Lord shall be seen in your destruction, and shall fill the earth as the waters fill the sea.

Woe to the licentious Chaldean, who giveth his neighbour drink, and maketh him drunken, that he may see his shame. Thy glory also shall be turned to dishonour: thou in thy turn shalt drink, and thy shame also shall be seen. The Lord's right hand shall give thee the cup of trembling, and the filth of thy vomiting shall defile thy glory. Thou hast hewn down the cedars of Lebanon [Isa. xxxvii. 24], and under their shadow thou hast hunted thy terrified prey; but thy violence shall return upon thine own head, the violence done to Judæa, and to Jerusalem, and to all the inhabitants thereof.

What profit is there in thy graven images, that the workman should make them? What doth thy molten image profit thee, thy god which teacheth a lie, that its maker should trust therein, and that he should make dumb idols? Woe to the idolater that saith to his wooden god, Awake! and to the dumb image of stone, Arise! It cannot teach: it is overlaid with gold and silver, and the breath of life is not in it.

The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth stand in awe of him.

TWENTY-FIRST HALF-HOUR.

HABAKKUK iii.

THE Prophet of Faith closes his short book with a hymn of unsurpassed grandeur, from the exposition whereof we greatly shrink, both because of its sublimity and because of the many difficulties which its interpretation presents. The best of commentators are in some measure at variance, not only as to the meaning of separate words and phrases, but as to the scope of the whole chapter; some regarding it as a record of God's mighty deeds in the past, others as a prophecy of his future works, although couched in language taken from the by-gone history of Israel. We shall give the interpretation at which we have arrived after much reflection and prayer; and once again it is in substantial agreement with that given by the great and good John Calvin.

Terrified by the revelation which he has received of the judgments about to be poured out upon his guilty country, the prophet beseeches the Lord to renew his ancient interpositions for the deliverance of Israel. He cries, "Revive thy work, and remember thy covenant of mercy; nothing else can save us from utter destruction" (verse 2). He then rapidly reviews God's marvellous dealings with Israel in the days of Moses and Joshua, seeking to comfort himself with the thought that God's ways are everlasting, that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever (verses 3—15). Next, the prophet describes afresh the extreme terror with which he had been filled by the revelation of God's righteous anger, and by the foreview of the desolation to be wrought by the Chaldean armies. Finally, looking all these calamities full in the face—fruitless trees, blasted cornfields, empty sheep-folds and cattle-stalls—he overleaps the dark mountains of tribulation on the "hinds' feet" of a living faith in the God who has been and will be his salvation, the heavenly Father who has laid up for his children an eternal inheritance in heaven.

Let us explain a few of the words and phrases used by Habakkuk before we attempt to paraphrase his beautiful psalm.

The words *Shigionoth* and *Selah* are of uncertain meaning. The former probably refers to the metre in which the psalm was written, or to the tune to which it was to be sung; the

latter is supposed to indicate a pause in the music, or some change in the tones of singers or instruments. It is sufficient for our purpose to know that these two terms, together with the closing dedication, "To the chief singer on my stringed instruments," mark out this chapter as a psalm intended to be used in the temple worship.

Teman and Mount Paran, in verse 3, are parts of the mountainous country where the law was given, and seem to be used here as poetical names for Sinai itself. Moses uses very similar language in Deut. xxxiii. 2: "The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from Mount Paran."

The horns coming out of God's hand, spoken of in verse 4, are supposed by some to be rays of light and glory; but it seems simpler and more correct to take them to mean strength, of which the horn is in Scripture a common emblem.

The tents of Cushan and curtains of Midian mentioned in verse 7 are the dwelling-places of Israel's enemies, and refer either to the events recorded in Judges vi., vii., and viii., or to similar victories over the same people in the days of Moses and Joshua. (See Num. xxxi. 1—12, and Josh. xiii. 21.)

The expression, "the oaths of the tribes, *even thy word*," in verse 9, has greatly puzzled commentators; the Hebrew text is difficult, and it is said that more than a hundred interpretations have been given. We have adopted that which seems to us simplest and best.

In verse 10 a most remarkable poetic image is used to set forth the effects of the presence of God at the passage of the Red Sea; the prophet represents the sea as awe-struck at the might of its Creator, lifting up its hands as a humble suppliant at his feet, and crying to him for mercy!

HABAKKUK iii.

¹ A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.

² O Lord, I have heard thy speech, *and was afraid*: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

PARAPHRASE.

The prayer of Habakkuk, to be used as a song or psalm.

O Lord, I have heard what thou hast said unto me, and I tremble at the coming judgments which thou hast revealed. O Lord, renew in our days thine ancient works of power; in our days show forth thy strength again: though thou art angry with us, remember for us thy covenant of mercy. [I

³ God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. ⁴ And *his* brightness was as the light; he had horns *coming* out of his hand: and there *was* the hiding of his power. ⁵ Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. ⁶ He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways *are* everlasting. ⁷ I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: *and* the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. ⁸ Was the Lord displeased against the rivers? *was* thine anger against the rivers? *was* thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses *and* thy chariots of salvation? ⁹ Thy bow was made quite naked, *according* to the oaths of the tribes, *even* thy word. Selah. Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers. ¹⁰ The mountains saw thee, *and* they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, *and* lifted up his hands on high. ¹¹ The sun *and* moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, *and* at the shining of thy glittering spear. ¹² Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger. ¹³ Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, *even* for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah. ¹⁴ Thou didst strike through with his staves the head of his villages: they came out as a whirl-

will meditate on the works which thou didst of old time.]

God came forth from the desert of the south, the Holy One of Israel from Mount Sinai. [He spake to us out of the midst of the fire;] his glory covered the heavens, and his majesty filled the earth. Bright as the light was the splendour of his presence: strength was in his hand, it was full of hidden power. [As He went forth to conquer for His people], before him marched the destroying pestilence, and hot thunderbolts attended his steps. He arose and surveyed the heritage of the heathen; he looked upon them, and drove them away as chaff: he scattered the lasting mountains of their land, and the ancient hills of Canaan shook at his coming. Then did Israel behold the tents of Cushan brought low by affliction, the dwellings of Midian consumed with terrors. What ailed the rivers? Wast thou displeased with them, O Lord? What ailed the rivers? Wast thou angry with them? What ailed the sea? Wast thou wroth with it? Nay, but thou didst fight for thy people, riding forth upon thine horses of power, upon thy chariots of salvation. Thou didst make ready thy weapons as a man of war: thou didst perform the promise sworn unto our fathers. Thou didst cleave the earth, and the waters gushed out, they ran in the dry places like a river. The mountains saw thee and feared: the waters of Jordan fled: the sea roared at thy presence, it lifted its suppliant hands to thee in dread and in submission. Sun and moon stood still in their spheres at the brighter glory of thy flashing lightnings, at the gleam of thy glittering sword: for thou didst march in indignation

wind to scatter me: their rejoicing was as to devour the poor secretly.

¹⁵ Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, *through* the heap of great waters.

¹⁶ When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops. ¹⁷ Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: ¹⁸ yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. ¹⁹ The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

The attempt to paraphrase an utterance of the Spirit of God must necessarily be full of failure. If we have cast any real light on the prophet's words, our prayer has been answered and our desire accomplished.

through the land of the Amorites, thou didst tread them in the wine-press of thy righteous anger. Thou didst go forth for the salvation of thy people, for the salvation of thine anointed: thou didst cut off the wicked from their dwelling-place, thou didst overturn their strongholds from the foundation. Thou destroyedst their armies by their own weapons, when they came forth as a whirlwind to scatter us, and rejoiced that they should devour us in secret as a lion in his den rends his helpless prey. Thou didst ride upon the sea with thine horses of power, thou dividedst its surging billows with thy chariots of salvation.

But now, O Lord, I hear thee speak in anger against Israel. I hear, and my belly trembles: my lips quiver at thy voice: my bones are consumed within me, and I exceedingly fear and quake. Be thou my refuge in the day of trouble, when the invader cometh up against us to compass us about with his armies. Our fig trees will no longer blossom for us, our vines will yield us no fruit; the produce of the olive-trees will fail us; our fields will give us no corn; our flocks will perish from the folds, and our herds from the stalls. [Read Jer. v. 15, 16, 17.] Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord my God will be my strength; he will make me to run without weariness, he will cause me to triumph over all my foes.

To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

TWENTY-SECOND HALF-HOUR.

ZEPHANIAH.

WE have now come to the last of the prophecies which preceded the overthrow of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity, if we except those of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Habakkuk also, whose message we have already considered, probably prophesied in the days of Jehoiakim, and therefore somewhat later than Zephaniah. One more glance at the times may be of use to throw some light on the prophecy before us.

Manasseh had filled Jerusalem from end to end with innocent blood, "which the Lord would not pardon"; his son Amon had followed his father's evil example, and perished without his father's repentance; Josiah had succeeded to the throne of Judah at the early age of eight years. We are told that "Josiah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left." At the age of twenty-six this godly king set about a thorough reformation, which is described in 2 Kings xxiii.; and we may well suppose that the prophet Zephaniah had no small share in stirring up the king to this great and arduous work. The royal reformer destroyed the vessels for Baal-worship which were found in the Lord's temple, and put down the idolatrous priests (the Chemarim of Zeph. i. 4), whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places of the cities of Judah. But the king's whole-heartedness towards his God could not alter the hearts of the majority of the people, nor could it alter the Lord's righteous determination to remove Judah out of his sight. The sacred historian tells us that before Josiah there was no king like unto him, "that turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him. Notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal" (2 Kings xxiii. 25, 26).

Those of our readers who can consult the Hebrew Bible will observe, if they compare Zeph. i. 1 with Prov. xxv. 1, that Hizkiah and Hezekiah are different English renderings

of the same Hebrew name, and this shows us why the prophet traces his genealogy back for four generations. There is no reason to doubt that the Hezekiah whom he claims as his great-great-grandfather was the good king of Judah who valued the proverbs of Solomon and walked in the ways of wisdom.

The Chemarim, as we have said above, were the idolatrous priests who burned incense to Baal; and the Malcham who was exalted to equality with Jehovah was probably the same as the horrid idol which the Ammonites dignified with the title of Moloch, or king.

"The second," "the hills," and "Maktesh" (i. 10, 11) are various quarters of Jerusalem, all doomed to feel the heavy hand of the Chaldean destroyer. The word represented in English by Maktesh means "The Mortar"; and it is thought that a certain valley in the city was so called from its shape. It seems to have been the quarter where the merchants resided.

In our first "Half-Hour" with Micah we saw that that prophet played, if we may so speak, upon the names of the places which he threatened. There are two similar instances in Zephaniah (ii. 4), which may be approximately reproduced in our own language thus: "Gaza shall become a gazing-stock, and Ekron shall be exterminated."

Now let us listen while the Lord's voice speaks of judgment and of mercy.

ZEPHANIAH.

¹ The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

² I will utterly consume all *things* from off the land, saith the Lord.

³ I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord.

⁴ I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal

PARAPHRASE.

In the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, the word of the Lord came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, saying:

I will bring utter destruction upon this land, saith the Lord: destruction upon man and beast, upon the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, upon the idols and their worshippers; yea, I will cut off man from the face of the ground, saith the Lord. Against Judah, and against all that dwell in Jerusalem will I stretch out mine hand; and I will cut off from this place every man that

from this place, *and* the name of the Chemarims with the priests; ⁵and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship *and* that swear by the Lord, and that swear by Malcham; ⁶and them that are turned back from the Lord; and *those* that have not sought the Lord, nor enquired for him.

⁷ Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand: for the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. ⁸ And it shall come to pass in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel. ⁹ In the same day also will I punish all those that leapon the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. ¹⁰ And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, *that there shall be* the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. ¹¹ Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. ¹² And it shall come to pass at that time, *that* I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil. ¹³ Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit *them*; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. ¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near, *it is near*, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. ¹⁵ That

still worshippeth Baal, and the very name of them that burn incense to him, and the priests that serve him; and them that worship sun, moon, and stars upon the housetops; and them that mingle the worship of Moloch with the worship of Jehovah; and them that forsake the Lord, seek him not, ask not after him.

Hush! for the Lord God cometh: the day of the Lord is near! His wrath claims a sacrifice in Jerusalem, and he hath summoned his guests. [The sacrifice here is the life of the wicked: the guests are the Chaldeans. See Ezek. ix.] And it shall come to pass in the day of my sacrifice, saith the Lord, that I will punish the king's court, and his family, and all those that follow the ways of the heathen [2 Kings xxv. 7, and 18—21]. In that day I will punish the servants of the great men, who break into the houses of the poor to fill their masters' houses with plunder and dishonest gain. And in that day, saith the Lord, cries of terror shall be heard from the Fish Gate, yells of fear from the Lower City, and the crash of falling buildings from the Hills. The merchants who dwell in Maktesh shall howl for the ruin that is come upon them; and all they that have loaded themselves with silver shall be cut off. And I will bring it to pass in that day that every hiding-place in Jerusalem shall be searched out and rifled; and I will punish the men who have said in their undisturbed security, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth: he will neither do good nor evil." Their foes shall rob them of their wealth, and lay waste their homes: others shall dwell in the houses which they have builded, and shall drink

day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶ a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. ¹⁷ And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. ¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

¹ Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; ² before the decree bring forth, *before* the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. ³ Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

⁴ For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they

the wine of the vineyards which they have planted. And think not that that day is far off; it is near, and cometh speedily: hear ye not its voice, the voice of the great day of the Lord? The mighty men become as women and cry bitterly. For that day is a day of wrath [*"Dies irae dies illa,"* adopted as the beginning of an ancient hymn on the Last Judgment], a day of tribulation and anguish, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day when the trumpet of the enemy shall sound an assault upon the fortified cities and their lofty battlements. For I the Lord will bring distress upon the inhabitants of the land, and they shall grope for the wall like the blind, because they have sinned against me. The sword of their enemies shall shed their blood like water, and their flesh shall be dung upon the face of the ground. Their riches shall not be able to ransom them in the day of mine anger; for the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of my jealousy, and I will make an end, a sudden end, of all that dwell therein.

Call a solemn assembly; yea, seek the Lord in a solemn assembly, hard-hearted and shameless nation: before his decree give birth to judgment, before ye be as the chaff which the wind driveth away, before the Lord's fury come upon you, and the day of his anger overtake you. Seek his face, all ye that have walked humbly in his statutes: follow after righteousness, follow after humility, if haply he may hide you in a pavilion in the day of his wrath.

[*Mine anger shall be upon Philistia, saith the Lord.*] Gaza

shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. ⁵Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the Lord *is* against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. ⁶And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks. ⁷And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

⁸I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified *themselves* against their border. ⁹Therefore *as* I live, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, *even* the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them. ¹⁰This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified *themselves* against the people of the Lord of hosts. ¹¹The Lord *will* be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and *men* shall worship him, every one from his place, *even* all the isles of the heathen.

¹²Ye Ethiopians also, ye *shall* be slain by my sword.

shall be a forlorn gazing-stock; Ashkelon a ruin; Ashdod shall be stormed in the heat of noon; Ekron shall be exterminated. Woe to the Cherethites, the dwellers on the coastland of Philistia; woe to thee, O Canaan, land of the Philistines! For the Lord hath spoken against you, saying: I will destroy your land, and cut off the inhabitants thereof. Your country by the sea shall be waste land for the pasturing of cattle, a place for the cottages of shepherds and the folds of flocks. The returning captives of Judah shall possess it; they shall feed their flocks along the shore, and shall lie down at evening in the deserted houses of Ashkelon. For the Lord their God will visit them, and will bring them again from the land of their captivity.

[Mine anger shall be upon Moab and Ammon, saith the Lord.] For I have heard the reproaches wherewith Moab hath reproached my people, and the revilings of Ammon when he haughtily invaded the heritage of Israel. [See Jud. xi. 12—28.] Therefore I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that Moab shall be like unto Sodom, and Ammon like unto Gomorrah; a place for nettles, a salt land, a desolation for ever. The residue of my people shall take their spoil, and the remnant of Israel shall inherit their substance. This shall be the reward of their pride, wherewith they have reproached and despised the people of the Lord of hosts. The Lord will be terrible unto them; for he will bring to nothing all the idols of the heathen, and he alone will be worshipped in every place; yea, in the far-off lands of the Gentiles.

Mine anger shall be upon Ethiopia: I will send against it those who shall ravage it with the sword.

¹³ And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. ¹⁴ And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; *their* voice shall sing in the windows; desolation *shall be* in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work. ¹⁵ This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I *am*, and *there is* none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

¹ Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! ² She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. ³ Her princes within her *are* roaring lions; her judges *are* evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. ⁴ Her prophets *are* light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. ⁵ The just Lord *is* in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame. ⁶ I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. ⁷ I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose

Mine anger shall be upon the people of the north: I will destroy Assyria, and will make her capital a desolation; Nineveh shall be a wilderness. Herds shall lie where her palaces stood, and beasts of every kind shall roam there. The pelican and the bittern shall roost among her fallen columns, and their doleful voices shall sound from the windows of her halls. The thresholds of her houses shall be desolate; the cedar panelling of her palaces shall be laid bare. And the passer-by shall say: "Is this the joyous city that dwelt secure, saying in her heart, I *am*, and there is none else? Behold, she is desolate, a dwelling-place for beasts." Thus shall she be a hissing and a derision to all that pass by.

[Mine anger shall be upon Jerusalem, saith the Lord.] Woe to the city that is filled with rebellion, defilement, and violence! I have spoken to her, but she hath not obeyed; I have instructed her, but she hath not listened: she hath not trusted in the Lord; she hath forsaken her God. Her princes are fierce as lions; her judges are as hungry evening wolves, which leave not the bones of their prey until the morning. Her prophets are worthless and deceitful; her priests profane my sanctuary and break my law. And yet the righteous Lord dwelleth in Jerusalem: he doeth no iniquity; morning by morning he showeth forth his justice and faileth not. But my people are unrighteous, saith the Lord, and know not how to blush. Yet I have cut off other nations, and have overthrown their strong places. I have laid waste their streets, so that none walketh in them: I have given their cities to destruction, so that no man is

early, *and* corrupted all their doings. ⁸ Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination *is* to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, *even* all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

⁹ For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, *even* the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering. ¹¹ In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain. ¹² I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. ¹³ The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make *them* afraid. ¹⁴ Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine

found there nor dwelleth therein. I said of Jerusalem: Surely she will fear me; she will hearken to my warnings, so that her dwelling shall not be cut off, and the threatened vengeance shall not be executed: but her people sinned eagerly; their ways were only evil, and that continually. Now therefore, saith the Lord, look for my coming in judgment, and expect the day of my vengeance. For I am resolved to gather the nations together against thee, and to assemble their forces to destroy thee; that by them I may pour upon thee mine indignation, and all the fierceness of my wrath: for the whole land shall be devoured with the fire of my jealous anger.

But in the latter days I will purify the lips of the heathen, that they may call upon my name, and serve me with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia shall come my suppliants, my scattered people, and shall offer to me sacrifices of righteousness. Then shalt thou no longer be ashamed, O Israel, although thou hast done wickedly and hast transgressed against me: for I will remove from the midst of thee the proud and the lofty, and thou shalt no more be haughty in my holy mountain. The remnant of my people shall be humble and poor in spirit, and shall trust in the name of the Lord. They shall not do iniquity nor speak lies, nor shall their tongue utter deceit. They shall feed in green pastures and lie down by still waters, and none shall make them afraid. Sing, O Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thine heart, thou virgin daughter of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath made an end of thy chastisements, and hath removed thine enemies far from thee. The Lord, the

enemy: the king of Israel, *even* the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. ¹⁶In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.* ¹⁷The Lord thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. ¹⁸I will gather *them that are* sorrowful for the solemn assembly, *who* are of thee, *to whom* the reproach of it *was* a burden. ¹⁹Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. ²⁰At that time will I bring you *again*, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.

King of Israel, dwelleth in the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more see evil. In that day it shall be said unto Jerusalem, Fear not; and to Zion, Be of good courage. The Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, mighty to save. He will rejoice over thee as His bride; he will rest in his love to thee; he will joy over thee with singing. He will gather together the exiles who have grieved for the loss of thy sacred festivals, and have been burdened with the reproaches that fell upon Zion. Behold, at that time I will cut off all thy foes. I will save the lame, and gather together the banished ones; and I will give glory and honour to those who have been put to shame before all the earth. At that time will I bring you home; at that time will I gather you: yea, I will give you glory and honour in the sight of all nations, when I shall work out your deliverance before your eyes, saith the Lord.

In the promises spoken through Zephaniah for the comfort of the godly who lived in those times there are contained, we doubt not, veiled predictions of the future glory of the Church of Christ; and the judgments denounced against Jerusalem picture to us the destruction of the ungodly at the day when God shall judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained.

*"Dies irae, dies illa,
Solvat saeculum in favilla."*

"That awful day, that day of ire,
Shall melt both earth and sky with fire."

TWENTY-THIRD HALF-HOUR.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

At length the blow which prophet after prophet had foretold fell upon Judah. Nebuchadnezzar came from Babylon to destroy the city which he had previously captured to no purpose. He felt now that he had to deal with a nation which would not submit, and therefore must be rooted up. One fortress after another fell before the Chaldean armies, and at length, after a siege of eighteen months, Jerusalem was taken.

The horrors of the siege, and of the sack which followed it, are such as history cannot describe, such as we can hardly conceive. Famine and pestilence did their deadly work within the city, while the enemy was yet outside the walls; and the cry went up, "Abroad the sword bereaveth, and at home there is as death." Gaunt mothers, maddened with hunger, slew and cooked their own children, and quarrelled like jackals over the terrible feast. Then came the end, which is best described in the language of Holy Writ: "And on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which is by the king's garden (now the Chaldees were against the city round about): and the king went the way toward the plain. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army was scattered from him. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon." One month later the destruction of the doomed city and its guilty princes was completed. Jeremiah tells us (Jer. lii. 12—27) that Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, came into Jerusalem and burned down the temple, and the king's palace, and all the houses of the great men, and employed his army to break down all the walls of Jerusalem; that he carried many of the people captive to Babylon; and that he took the chief priest, about a dozen other persons of high rank, and

threescore men of the people of the land, and brought them before the king of Babylon at Riblah, where they were all put to death. Thus God avenged the innocent blood which they had shed.

The sky of Jerusalem was dark indeed; and out of the darkness came the cry which is recorded in the Lamentations, a cry which tells of burning buildings and battered walls, of slaughtered elders and murdered infants, of matrons and maidens placed hopelessly in the power of a brutal soldiery.

This book forms a fitting link between those prophets whose writings we have already considered, and those who prophesied after the return of the people from Babylon. Each of the five chapters is a separate and complete poem. The theme of the middle one is the prophet's own afflictions,

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.—I.

¹ How doth the city sit solitary, *that was* full of people! *how* is she become as a widow! she *that was* great among the nations, *and* princess among the provinces, *how* is she become tributary!

² She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears *are* on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort *her*: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

³ Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

⁴ The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she *is* in bitterness.

⁵ Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

⁶ And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts *that* find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

⁷ Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, *and* did mock at her sabbaths.

⁸ Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

⁹ Her filthiness *is* in her skirts; she remembereth not her last end; therefore she came down wonderfully: she had no comforter. O Lord, behold my affliction: for the enemy hath magnified *himself*.

and its gloom is relieved by a sweet interlude of gospel comfort (iii. 19—41); the other four lament the woes of the city and the nation. The first four chapters or poems have in the original Hebrew a peculiarity which is lost to the English reader: they are alphabetical acrostics. In the third chapter the arrangement is more intricate than in the first, second, and fourth; for here verses 1, 2, and 3 all begin with A, verses 4, 5, and 6 with B, and so on to the end of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. We have endeavoured to reproduce these features in the following metrical version. The task has not been easy, and in the third chapter it was evidently impossible to keep close to the wording of the original. If our readers would profit by our labour, they must carefully compare our lines with Jeremiah's words.

I.

Alas, lone city! Where is now thy throng?
 Where is thy majesty, thou widowed queen?
 Where, empress of the lands, thy freedom strong?

By night thine eye with streaming sorrow flows:
 No lover loves thee now, nor shares thy grief;
 Thy friends are false, yea, all thy friends are foes.

Canst thou by flight escape thy bonds and pain?
 Or seekest thou among the heathen rest?
 Thy swift pursuer scorns the effort vain.

Deserted are thy feasts, thy ways forlorn;
 Thy gates lie waste; thy priestly singers sigh;
 Thy maidens wail; thine heart with grief is torn.

Exulting foes in triumph o'er thee ride
 Armed with the wrath of thine offended God,
 And tear thy captive children from thy side.

Fair Zion's pride is laid for ever low;
 Her warrior-princes faint like famished deer,
 Or flee in vain before their swifter foe.

Great memories of ancient glory mock
 The anguish of her helpless, hopeless fall:
 Her sabbaths are the victor's laughing-stock.

Her grievous sin o'erwhelms her with disgrace:
 Her former vassals all behold her shame;
 And she lamenting turns, and hides her face.

Judgment she feared not, but in blood of saints
 Imbrued her hands: justice approves her doom,
 Exalts her foes, is deaf to her complaints.

¹⁰ The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things : for she hath seen *that* the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command *that* they should not enter into thy congregation.

¹¹ All her people sigh, they seek bread : they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul : see, O Lord, and consider ; for I am become vile.

¹² *Is it* nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted *me* in the day of his fierce anger.

¹³ From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaiileth against them : he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back : he hath made me desolate *and* faint all the day.

¹⁴ The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand : they are wreathed, *and* come up upon my neck : he hath made my strength to fall, the Lord have delivered me into *their* hands, *from whom* I am not able to rise up.

¹⁵ The Lord hath trodden under foot all my mighty *men* in the midst of me : he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men : the Lord hath trodden the virgin, the daughter of Judah, *as* in a wine-press.

¹⁶ For these *things* I weep ; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me : my children are desolate, because the enemy prevailed.

¹⁷ Zion spreadeth forth her hands, *and there is* none to comfort her : the Lord hath commanded concerning Jacob, *that* his adversaries *should be* round about him : Jerusalem is as a menstruous woman among them.

¹⁸ The Lord is righteous ; for I have rebelled against his commandment : hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow : my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

¹⁹ I called for my lovers, *but* they deceived me : my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

²⁰ Behold, O Lord ; for I *am* in distress : my bowels are troubled ; mine heart is turned within me ; for I have grievously rebelled : abroad the sword bereaveth, at home *there is* as death.

²¹ They have heard that I sigh : *there is* none to comfort me : all mine enemies have heard of my trouble ; they are glad that thou hast done *it* : thou wilt bring the day *that* thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

²² Let all their wickedness come before thee ; and do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions : for my sighs *are* many, and my heart is faint.

II.

¹ How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, *and* cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger !

Kings of the heathen spoil her pleasant things,
And strangers desecrate with feet profane
The presence-chamber of the King of kings.

Lo, all her people, pressed with famine sore,
Give choicest treasure for their daily bread :
Abject she cries, but God regards no more.

My God hath brought the days of vengeance nigh ;
And see, was ever sorrow like to mine ?
Ah, is it nought to you, ye passers-by ?

Not earth but heaven consumes my bones with fire ;
Not man but God my flying footsteps foils :
All day I droop beneath his wasting ire.

On my own neck he binds the iron bands
Of sins whose memory chills my fainting heart :
He gives me to my foe's resistless hands.

Proud were my warriors : fallen is their pride,
Crushed by the mustered armies of his wrath :
As from a wine-press flows their blood's red tide.

Quenched in the fountain of its tearful woe
Mine eye hath lost its light ; and none condoles :
My babes are carried captive by the foe.

Ruthless are all my neighbours, and I flee
In vain from God to man, from man to God :
I am unclean, unclean ! Ah, woe is me !

Still let a rebel own that justice reigns,
Though all the world be startled at my doom,
And all my sons and daughters grind in chains.

To all my paramours I call in vain :
My streets are strewn with bodies of the dead,
Of priests and elders hoar, by famine slain.

Unto my God I pour my suppliant breath,
All heavy-hearted with my load of sin :
Abroad is bloodshed, and at home is death.

Who heareth not the voice of my despair ?
And who hath pity ? All my foes are glad.
Yet they ere long the cup of wrath shall share.

Yea, God of justice, give to each his part
Of righteous retribution ; plead my cause :
For many are my sighs, and faint my heart.

II.

A cloud of anger darkens Zion's sky :
God lays in dust her pinnacles of pride,
And spurns the footstool of his majesty.

² The Lord hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied : he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah ; he hath brought *them* down to the ground : he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

³ He hath cut off in *his* fierce anger all the horn of Israel : he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire, *which* devoureth round about.

⁴ He hath bent his bow like an enemy : he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all *that were* pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion : he poured out his fury like fire.

⁵ The Lord was as an enemy : he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces : he hath destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

⁶ And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as *if it were* of a garden : he hath destroyed his places of the assembly : the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

⁷ The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces ; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast.

⁸ The Lord hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion : he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying : therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament ; they languished together.

⁹ Her gates are sunk into the ground ; he hath destroyed and broken her bars : her king and her princes *are* among the Gentiles : the law is no *more* ; her prophets also find no vision from the Lord.

¹⁰ The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, *and* keep silence : they have cast up dust upon their heads ; they have girded themselves with sackcloth : the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.

¹¹ Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people ; because the children and the sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

¹² They say to their mothers, Where *is* corn and wine ? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom.

¹³ What thing shall I take to witness for thee ? what thing shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem ? what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Zion ? for thy breach is great like the sea : who can heal thee ?

¹⁴ Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee : and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity ; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.

¹⁵ All that pass by clap *their* hands at thee ; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, *saying*, Is this the city that *men* call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth ?

Billows of fire o'er Judah's homesteads flame ;
 Relentless whirlwinds wreck her palaces ;
 Her nobles pine in slavery and shame.

Consumed is Salem's strength, her hope expires :
 The hand that once her every foe repelled
 Now circles her with sin-avenging fires.

Death-dealing shafts from God's own quiver sent
 Lay Judah's goodliest sons and daughters low ;
 The bolts of heaven flash furious on his tent.

Each battlement and every palace falls,
 Gulfed in the whirlpool of the Almighty's wrath,
 And sorrow unto sorrow ceaseless calls.

Forsaken now are Zion's solemn feasts ;
 Fallen like some frail booth her sacred fane ;
 Her king accursed, and reprobate her priests.

God from his altar and his sanctuary
 Loathing retires, abandons them to foes ;
 And temple-psalm gives place to ribald cry.

High heaven hath purposed Zion's overthrow,
 Hath meted out destruction to her walls,
 And whelmed her battled towers in waves of woe.

In troops through all her gates destroyers come ;
 Her exiled princes serve in heathen lands ;
 Her laws are silent, and her prophets dumb.

Keep silence all ! Ye elders, sit in dust^d
 With ash-besprinkled heads and sad attire :
 Ye sorrowing virgins, own that God is just.

Lament, mine heart, with Zion's trouble pressed :
 Weep, weep, mine eye, for stricken Salem's woes,
 Whose infants perish at their mother's breast.

Mother, I starve ! Oh, hear thy darling's cry !
 The mother's darling in the city moans ;
 And on her helpless bosom sinks to die.

No grief with thine, O Zion, may compare :
 No fellow-sufferer soothe thy matchless pain,
 Or sound the ocean depths of thy despair.

Of the vain prophets who have wrought thy fall
 None loved thee well enough to chide thy sin :
 They saw deceitful visions, one and all.

Point, all ye passers-by, your scornful hands
 At Salem's ruins, mock her shame, and cry :
 Is this the peerless glory of all lands ?

¹⁶ All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee : they hiss and gnash the teeth : they say, We have swallowed *her* up : certainly this is the day that we looked for ; we have found, we have seen *it*.

¹⁷ The Lord hath done *that* which he had devised ; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old : he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied : and he hath caused *thine* enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

¹⁸ Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night : give thyself no rest ; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

¹⁹ Arise, cry out in the night : in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord : lift up thy hands toward him for the life of thy young children, that faint for hunger in the top of every street.

²⁰ Behold, O Lord, and consider to whom thou hast done this. Shall the women eat their fruit, *and* children of a span long ? shall the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord ?

²¹ The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets : my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword : thou hast slain *them* in the day of thine anger ; thou hast killed, *and* not pitied.

²² Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the Lord's anger none escaped nor remained : those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

III.

¹ *I am* the man *that* hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

² He hath led me, and brought *me into* darkness, but not *into* light.

³ Surely against me is he turned ; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.

⁴ My flesh and my skin hath he made old ; he hath broken my bones.

⁵ He hath builded against me, and compassed *me* with gall and travail.

⁶ He hath set me in dark places, as *they that be* dead of old.

⁷ He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out : he hath made my chain heavy.

⁸ Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

⁹ He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

¹⁰ He *was* unto me *as* a bear lying in wait, *and* as a lion in secret places.

¹¹ He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces : he hath made me desolate.

¹² He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

¹³ He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

¹⁴ I was a derision to all my people ; *and* their song all the day.

¹⁵ He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

¹⁶ He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

¹⁷ And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace : I forgot pro-

¹⁸ And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord :

[*sperity*].

Quires of exultant foes thine overthrow
Proclaim rejoicing: Ha! the day is come!
Behold, our hated rival lieth low.

Ruin was set before thee from of old
As fruit and righteous recompense of sin:
God's anger makes thine adversaries bold.

Sadly thou criest to heaven; thy ramparts weep!
Weep on, lorn citadel, by day, by night;
Let not the fountain of thy sorrow sleep.

Till daybreak pour thy tears at Mercy's feet:
Plead for thy children, plead: they faint, they die:
Fell famine strews their bones in every street.

Vengeance is thine, O Lord: but ah, relent!
Shall mothers eat their babes? And canst thou see
Thy holy courts with blood of priests besprent?

Where young and old have fallen, there they lie.
Above my youths and maidens gleams the sword,
And God's unpitying anger bids them die.

Ye hosts assembled as by trump of heaven
To solemn festival, 'tis heaven's just will
That to your murderous swords my sons be given.

III.

Afflicted by the rod of wrath divine,
And dark amid the burning blaze of noon,
Ah me! I fear my God no more is mine.

Bruised is my flesh, and broken are my bones;
Black with the shades of death my prison-house;
Blood marks my path across life's rugged stones.

Chains forged by heaven confine me to my cell;
Cries, groans, and supplications die unheard;
Confusion's crooked paths my sorrows swell.

Dreadful as lion's roar God's thunders roll;
Dark is my way and desolate mine heart;
Destruction spends its shafts upon my soul.

Envenomed arrows from the Eternal's bow!
Embittered draughts of wormwood from his hand!
Endless revilings flung by friend and foe!

Filled is my mouth with gravel and with gall;
Far off from peace my soul forgets repose;
Fled is my strength, my hope, my God, my all.

¹⁹ Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

²⁰ My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

²¹ This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

²² *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.*

²³ *They are new every morning : great is thy faithfulness.*

²⁴ The Lord is my portion, saith my soul ; therefore will I hope in him.

²⁵ The Lord *is* good unto them that wait for him, to the soul *that* seeketh him.

²⁶ *It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.*

²⁷ *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.*

²⁸ He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne *it* upon him.

²⁹ He putteth his mouth in the dust ; if so be there may be hope.

³⁰ He giveth *his* cheek to him that smiteth him : he is filled full with reproach.

³¹ For the Lord will not cast off for ever :

³² But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

³³ For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

³⁴ To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,

³⁵ To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,

³⁶ To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.

³⁷ Who *is* he *that* saith, and it cometh to pass, *when* the Lord commandeth *it* not ?

³⁸ Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good ?

³⁹ Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins ?

⁴⁰ Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.

⁴¹ Let us lift up our heart with *our* hands unto God in the heavens.

⁴² We have transgressed and have rebelled : thou hast not pardoned.

⁴³ Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us : thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.

⁴⁴ Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that *our* prayer should not pass through. [the people.]

⁴⁵ Thou hast made us *as* the offscouring and refuse in the midst of

⁴⁶ All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

⁴⁷ Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

⁴⁸ Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

⁴⁹ Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission,

⁵⁰ Till the Lord look down, and behold from heaven.

⁵¹ Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city.

⁵² Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.

⁵³ They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.

⁵⁴ Waters flowed over mine head ; *then* I said, I am cut off.

Great God, whose hand the wormwood and the gall
Giveth to whom thou lovest, let thy love
Grant hope's sweet cordial to my lowly call.

Heaven's mercy tempers heaven's chastising rod :
He who is faithful changeth nevermore :
He is my hope, my portion, and my God.

Is it not good to seek the God of truth ?
Is it not good to wait until he save ?
Is it not good to bear his yoke in youth ?

Keep silence, suppliants ; humbly bow the knee :
Kiss ye his footstool till he bid you rise :
Keep silence till he make the accuser flee.

Lean on the faithful arm that never fails :
Love chides not evermore, nor loves to chide :
Light are its blows, and pity soon prevails.

Man binds on man the yoke of slavery ;
Mercy departs, and wickedness is law ;
Might rules below : but justice reigns on high.

No powers of earth are uncontrolled of heaven :
No good nor ill but serves the will of God :
Never without just cause his stripes are given.

Our ways are evil, Lord, and thine are just :
Our heart's confession at thy feet we pour :
O, may transgressors in thy mercy trust ?

Pity yet sleeps, and sleepless vengeance slays :
Prayer pierces not the clouds that hide thy throne :
Proud heathen scorn us, and our guilt dismays.

Quelled by her circling foes, consumed with fears,
Quick sinks Jerusalem to ruin's night :
Quenched is her children's joy in bloody tears.

Rest not, mine eye ; weep on, till Salem's God,
Regarding Salem's unexampled woe,
Redeem her daughters from oppression's rod.

Sore snares of death encompass me ; I lie
Sunk in the mire that floods my prison floor ;
Sorrow's deep waves roll o'er me, and I die.

⁵⁵ I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon.

⁵⁶ Thou hast heard my voice : hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.

⁵⁷ Thou drewest near in the day *that* I called upon thee : thou saidst, Fear not.

⁵⁸ O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul ; thou hast redeemed my life.

⁵⁹ O Lord, thou hast seen my wrong : judge thou my cause.

⁶⁰ Thou hast seen all their vengeance *and* all their imaginations against me.

⁶¹ Thou hast heard their reproach, O Lord, *and* all their imaginations against me ;

⁶² The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.

⁶³ Behold their sitting down, and their rising up ; I *am* their musick.

⁶⁴ Render unto them a recompence, O Lord, according to the work of their hands.

⁶⁵ Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.

⁶⁶ Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the Lord.

IV.

¹ How is the gold become dim ! *how* is the most fine gold changed ! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

² The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter !

³ Even the sea monsters draw out the breast, they give suck to their young ones : the daughter of my people *is become* cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.

⁴ The tongue of the sucking child cleaveth to the roof of his mouth for thirst : the young children ask bread, *and* no man breaketh *it* unto them.

⁵ They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets : they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

⁶ For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her.

⁷ Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing *was* of sapphire :

To thee, O God, I call ; incline thine ear :
Thou in my need hast heard my suppliant cry :
Thine hand hath saved me from each gloomy fear.

Unto thy judgment I commit my woes :
Under thy wings my life hath dwelt secure :
Unto thy righteous wrath I leave my foes.

When they revile, thou seest all my wrong ;
When they unite to curse, thou knowest, Lord :
Wilt thou permit my grief to be their song ?

Ye days of vengeance, recompense their deeds :
Ye scorpions of remorse, their bosoms tear :
Ye heavens, descend in tempest on their heads.

IV.

Ah, dim is now the precious gold
Resplendent once in Salem's shrine ;
And scattered wide the polished stones
That walled and paved her courts divine.

Bright was the glory of her sons,
As shining gold or burnished steel ;
But now like broken sherds they lie,
The refuse of the potter's wheel.

Cruel the she-wolves are, yet know
To feed their whelps with nature's food :
Our matrons from their infants turn,
As turns the ostrich from its brood.

Dried with long thirst the suckling's tongue
In anguish to its palate cleaves :
Young children cry for meat in vain ;
No kindly hand their want relieves.

Emaciate outcasts in the streets,
The sons of affluence, pine for bread ;
And putrid dunghills are a couch
For limbs erewhile on purple laid.

For us remains a heavier doom
Than fell on Sodom from the sky :
Sodom to swift destruction sank,
We die in lingering agony.

Graceful and strong our nobles stood
Arrayed in beauty fair and fresh :
Bright were their eyes as brightest gems,
And white and ruddy was their flesh.

⁸ Their visage is blacker than a coal; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick.

⁹ *They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain with hunger: for these pine away, stricken through for want of the fruits of the field.*

¹⁰ The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children; they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

¹¹ The Lord hath accomplished his fury; he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

¹² The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world, would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

¹³ For the sins of her prophets, *and* the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her,

¹⁴ They have wandered *as blind men* in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

¹⁵ They cried unto them, Depart ye; *it is* unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn *there*.

¹⁶ The anger of the Lord hath divided them; he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests, they favoured not the elders.

¹⁷ As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation *that* could not save *us*.

¹⁸ They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

Haggard with blackening famine now
They walk their native streets unknown ;
Strangers to all who loved them once,
Gaunt spectres clothed with skin and bone.

In war's grim field to dare and die,
By worthy foeman's weapon slain,
Were sweeter than to perish here
Consumed by hunger's conquering pain.

Kind women yield to famine's rage ;
And, maddened by their desperate doom,
Seethe their own children in despair,
And eat the offspring of their womb.

Lord, 'tis thine hand that strikes us down ;
We own thine indignation just :
Thy righteous anger lights the flame
That crumbles Zion's wall to dust.

Marvel, ye nations, at the fall
Of gates which once withstood the world :
Marvel to see Chaldæa's flag
On Judah's battlements unfurled.

Nay, wonder not at Zion's fall ;
'Tis but the righteous meed of guilt :
Her stones are red with blood of saints
By godless priests and prophets spilt.

O prophets blind with lust of blood !
O priests insane with thirst to slay !
Your garments are with gore defiled ;
Men shrink to touch you by the way.

Polluted with your deeds of death,
As lepers from your dwellings driven,
E'en heathen lands refuse you rest,
Outcasts of earth, accursed of heaven.

Quail at the anger of the Lord,
Who drives you forth and spurns your prayer :
Ye heeded not your victim's cry ;
'Tis yours to tremble and despair.

Ruin is near, and Zion's sons
In vain the help of Egypt crave :
When God's avengers gird her round,
The hand of Egypt cannot save.

Snares line our paths, and through our streets
Chaldæa's cruel sleuth-hounds roam :
The destined day of doom is near ;
Our end is come ! Our end is come !

¹⁹ Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven : they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

²⁰ The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

²¹ Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, that dwellest in the land of Uz ; the cup also shall pass through unto thee : thou shalt be drunken, and shalt make thyself naked.

²² The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion ; he will no more carry thee away into captivity : he will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom ; he will discover thy sins.

V.

- ¹ Remember, O Lord, what is come upon us :
consider, and behold our reproach.
- ² Our inheritance is turned to strangers,
our houses to aliens.
- ³ We are orphans and fatherless,
our mothers *are* as widows.
- ⁴ We have drunken our water for money ;
our wood is sold unto us.
- ⁵ Our necks *are* under persecution :
we labour, *and* have no rest.
- ⁶ We have given the hand *to* the Egyptians, *and to* the Assyrians,
to be satisfied with bread.
- ⁷ Our fathers have sinned, *and are* not ;
and we have borne their iniquities.
- ⁸ Servants have ruled over us :
there is none that doth deliver *us* out of their hand.
- ⁹ We gat our bread with *the peril* of our lives
because of the sword of the wilderness.
- ¹⁰ Our skin was black like an oven
because of the terrible famine.
- ¹¹ They ravished the women in Zion,
and the maids in the cities of Judah.
- ¹² Princes are hanged up by their hand :
the faces of elders were not honoured.
- ¹³ They took the young men to grind,
and the children fell under the wood.
- ¹⁴ The elders have ceased from the gate,
the young men from their musick.
- ¹⁵ The joy of our heart is ceased ;
our dance is turned into mourning.
- ¹⁶ The crown is fallen *from* our head :
woe unto us, that we have sinned !

Tireless and strong our foes pursue,
Like eagles swift to strike their prey :
They chase us o'er the mountain-side,
And lurk around the desert way.

Under the shadow of our king
We yet might live on heathen soil ;
He is our life : but lo, he falls
Like stricken deer in huntsman's toil.

Woe to thee, cruel Edom, woe !
Why shouldst thou glory o'er our fall ?
Thou too shalt drink the cup of wrath,
Shalt lose thine honour and thine all.

Yea, God thy malice shall requite,
And strip thee naked to thy shame ;
While Salem rests beneath his wings,
And glories in her Saviour's name.

V.

Remember, Lord, our miseries untold ;
Our burning shame behold.
The lordly foreigner our heir becomes,
And violates our homes.
Fathers are slaughtered, orphaned children moan,
And widowed mothers groan.
We buy the water that our thirst requires,
And fuel for our fires.
By yoke of slavery all day oppressed
We toil, and find no rest.
We cringe to bitterest foes in time of need,
And ask a dole of bread.
Our fathers treasured up the wrath of God ;
We bear the heavy load.
Slaves are our lords, relentless as the grave,
And none draws nigh to save.
We seek our bread at peril of our lives
Mid brigands' murderous knives.
The breath of famine o'er our skin hath passed
Like withering furnace-blast.
Fierce foes dishonour Jewish matron's name,
And Jewish virgin's fame.
They hang our princes at the palace gate ;
The elders share their fate.
Youths faint beneath the millstone's ponderous load,
Babes beneath logs of wood.
The elders in the gate no longer stay
To hear the young men play.
All hearts are sad ; no nimble feet advance
To lead the joyous dance.
The wreath of gladness withers on our brow ;
Under sin's load we bow.

- ¹⁷ For this our heart is faint ;
 for these *things* our eyes are dim.
- ¹⁸ Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate,
 the foxes walk upon it.
- ¹⁹ Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever ;
 thy throne from generation to generation.
- ²⁰ Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever,
 and forsake us so long time ?
- ²¹ Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned ;
 renew our days as of old.
- ²² But thou hast utterly rejected us ;
 thou art very wroth against us.

TWENTY-FOURTH HALF-HOUR.

HAGGAI.

When the Lord had accomplished seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem (Dan. ix. 2), he stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, saying, " All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me ; and he hath charged me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is among you of all his people ? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up " (Ezra i. 1—4).

In pursuance of this decree, a remnant of the captive Jews, under the leadership of Sheshbazzar, whose Hebrew name was Zerubbabel, returned to Jerusalem, bearing with them the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple of Solomon. Having reached Jerusalem in safety, through the good hand of their God upon them, they set up the Lord's altar, offered sacrifice, and began to rebuild the temple. But unforeseen difficulties arose. By various machinations the enemies of the Jews obtained authority from the Persian court to stop the building of temple and city, and thereupon " went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius, king of Persia. Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel " (Ezra iv. 23—v. 1).

A cloud of sorrow broods upon our hearts,
Light from our eyes departs,
Because on Zion's desolated walls
Jackal to jackal calls.
Yet thy dominion, Lord, doth ever last ;
Thy throne stands ever fast.
Canst thou forget thine own eternal love ?
Thy covenant remove ?
Renew thy favours to thy chosen fold,
As in the days of old.
Ah, shall thy promise fail for evermore ?
Thy wrath be ever sore ?

The above brief sketch of the times, given for the most part in the words of Scripture, may serve as an introduction to our exposition of the prophecy of Haggai. We need not enter into any discussion of the historical or chronological questions connected with the names of Cyrus, Artaxerxes, and Darius. But we may add that it is evident from Haggai's words that the opposition of external enemies was not the only hindrance to the rebuilding of the temple. The people grew cold and careless, and spent all their time and energy on building houses for themselves. Not content with ordinary dwelling-places, they indulged their pride and luxury by building expensive and elegant mansions, while the house of the Lord lay unfinished and waste.

The prophecy before us begins with a sharp reproof of this selfish indolence, showing that it is the cause of various chastisements and disasters that have befallen the people. This rebuke soon bore good fruit, for we are told that in less than a month the prince, the high priest, and the people were all actively engaged in the work of rebuilding the Lord's house, cheered by another brief but important message from heaven, "I am with you, saith the Lord."

A month later came another message, full of encouragement for the people, and enriched with a promise of the glory of him who is greater than Solomon.

Two months later still the prophet received two messages in one day: the first consisting of mingled reproof and blessing; the second pointing onward to the days of the Prince before whose throne all other thrones must fall, the

King whose kingdom shall be established by the Lord of hosts for ever and ever.

One difficulty in this prophecy calls for special notice. It is found in the seventh verse of the second chapter: The desire of all nations shall come." The original Hebrew word for "shall come" is plural, equivalent, if we may so speak, to "they shall come." Now Christ may fitly be called the desire of all nations, inasmuch as there are found, or shall be found, in every nation under heaven those who long for his appearing. Yet it seems almost certain, for the reason given above, that the words, "desire of all nations," do not really bear that meaning in this passage, but must be taken to mean the treasures of all nations. Such is the opinion of many learned and godly commentators, including John Calvin, who says with his customary impartiality and clear-sightedness: "This admits of two explanations. The first is that nations shall come, and bring with them everything that is precious in order to consecrate it to the service of God; for the Hebrews call whatever is valuable a desire. . . . The second is that these words mean Christ; for we know that Christ was the expectation of the whole world, according to what is said in Isaiah. And it may be properly said that when the desire of all nations shall come, that is, when Christ shall be manifested, in whom the wishes of all ought to centre, the glory of the second temple shall then be illustrious. But as it immediately follows 'The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,' the more simple meaning is that which I first stated, that the nations should come, bringing with them all their riches, that they might offer themselves and all their possessions as a sacrifice to God." Good Dr. Gill takes an opposite view; but, in spite of our reluctance to part with the belief that "the desire of all nations" in this passage means our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we must admit that in our judgment Calvin's view is right. It is always best to assign to the Scriptures their true and proper meaning.

HAGGAI.

¹ In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of

PARAPHRASE.

On the first day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius, king of Persia, the Lord spake by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah, and unto Joshua the high priest:

Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedeck, the high priest, saying,
² Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.
³ Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,
⁴ *Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?* ⁵ Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. ⁶ Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages *to put it into a bag with holes.*

⁷ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. ⁸ Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. ⁹ Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came to little*; and when ye brought *it* home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that *is waste*, and ye run every man unto his own house. ¹⁰ Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed *from* her fruit. ¹¹ And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

¹² Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedeck, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai

Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The people say, The time for rebuilding the house of the Lord is not yet come. But the Lord saith unto them, Is the time come for you to build for yourselves houses of cedar, while my house lieth waste? Consider your ways, saith the Lord of hosts. On account of your slothfulness in my service, your meat, your drink, and your very clothing have been insufficient and unblest; your labour has been lost, and your earnings scattered.

Consider your ways, saith the Lord of hosts. Go ye, hew wood upon the mountains, bring it, and build mine house: I will take pleasure in the work of your hands, and will accept the honour that ye shall do unto me, saith the Lord of hosts. Hitherto when ye have looked for a plentiful harvest, it has failed; and I have even destroyed the little that ye brought home. Why hath this been? saith the Lord of hosts. Because ye leave my house in ruins that ye may build your own with diligence. Therefore have I forbidden the heavens to give you their dew, and the earth to yield you its increase. Because of your sin I have sent drought upon the earth, a blight upon the land and its mountains, upon corn, wine, oil, and all the produce of the ground, upon men, and cattle, and all your labour.

Then Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the remnant of the captivity obeyed the words which the Lord their God had spoken by Haggai the prophet; for they saw that the Lord had sent him, and

the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord. ¹³Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, *I am with you*, saith the Lord. ¹⁴And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God, ¹⁵in the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

¹In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, ²Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, ³Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? *is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?* ⁴Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for *I am with you*, saith the Lord of hosts: ⁵*according to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not.* ⁶For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; ⁷and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁸The

they feared before the Lord. And Haggai the Lord's messenger received yet another message from the Lord unto the people: *I am with you*, saith the Lord. Thus did the Lord stir up the zeal of Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the people, so that they came and worked at the building of the house of the Lord their God in the 24th day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius king of Persia.

On the 21st day of the next month the word of the Lord came again unto Haggai: Say unto Zerubbabel and unto Joshua and unto all the people: As many of you as saw my house in its ancient glory, what think ye of it now? Doth it not appear to you as nothing? Nevertheless be of good courage, thou prince of Judah; be of good courage, thou high priest of Judah; be of good courage, ye people, saith the Lord, and work: for *I am with you*, saith the Lord of hosts. I remember the covenant that I made with you when I brought you up out of Egypt, and my Spirit abideth with you: fear not. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet a little while and I will shake once more heaven and earth, sea and land: yea, I will shake all nations; and from all nations shall precious offerings flow into mine house, and I will fill it with glory, saith the Lord of hosts: for the silver and the gold are mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of mine house shall be greater than the former, [for Messiah the prince shall be seen therein,] saith the Lord of

silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁹The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

¹⁰In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, ¹¹Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, ¹²If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. ¹³Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. ¹⁴Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean.

¹⁵And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord: ¹⁶since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. ¹⁷I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord.

¹⁸Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. ¹⁹Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the

hosts: and by him will I give the peace that passeth understanding, saith the Lord of hosts,

In the 24th day of the ninth month of the same year came the word of the Lord to Haggai again: Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Ask the priests what the law saith: if a man bear in the fold of his garment the flesh of a sacrifice, and touch with his garment any common food, will that touch sanctify the food? The priests answered, No. Then said Haggai, [Neither can your ceremonies sanctify your unhallowed lives.] But if one who is defiled by a dead body touch food, shall that food be made unclean? The priests answered, Yea, it shall be made unclean. Then said the prophet, So are the people of this nation before me, saith the Lord; and so is all the work of their hands. They have defiled themselves by forsaking the house of their God, and therefore all their worship is unclean and unaccepted. Consider therefore, I pray you, consider how it fares with you from this day onward. Before ye began to lay stone upon stone in my temple, it came to pass continually that where the husbandman looked for twenty measures of corn he found but ten, and where the vintner looked for fifty firkins of wine, his wine-press yielded but twenty. I smote all the works of your hands with blight, and mildew, and hail: yet ye repented not, saith the Lord. But now that ye have begun to rebuild my temple, from this 24th day of this ninth month and onward, consider my dealings with you. Your corn is yet un-

vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth : from this day will I bless *you*.

²⁰ And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth *day* of the month, saying, ²¹ Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth ; ²² and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen ; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them ; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. ²³ In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet : for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

The promise of Messiah's glory underlies the promise to exalt Zerubbabel, just as the promise of the eternal Father to his eternal Son underlies the promise made to David concerning Solomon. [Compare 2 Sam. vii. 14 with Heb. i. 5.] We have tried to word our paraphrase so as to direct attention to this fact, without taking any undue liberty with the utterances of the prophet. May the blessed Son of God open our understanding, so that we may no longer be foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken concerning him.

grown, your vines, fig-trees, pomegranates, and olive - trees have not yet yielded their produce : but your crops shall prosper, and your trees shall yield abundantly : for from this day will I bless *you*.

On the same day the word of the Lord came again to Haggai, saying : Thus saith the Lord to Zerubbabel, the prince of Judah : I will shake heaven and earth ; I will overthrow the thrones of kings, and will bring to nothing the might of the heathen. The chariots and their drivers, the horses and their riders, will I overthrow, each by the sword of his brother. But in that day I will take thee, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, my servant, saith the Lord, and will make thee exalted and honourable as the signet on my right hand : for I have chosen the Prince of the house of David to reign over my people for ever, saith the Lord.

TWENTY-FIFTH HALF-HOUR.

ZECHARIAH i., ii.

God's servant Haggai was not left to labour alone. In the same year the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, first in the form of a short message of admonition

and exhortation (i. 1—6), and then in a series of eight visions (i. 7—vi. 8), for the most part full of encouragement, but not unmingled with reproof and warning. These were followed by an emblematic prophecy of the great King who should be a priest upon his throne (vi. 9—15), and also by words of encouragement spoken in answer to an enquiry which the men of Bethel addressed to the Lord concerning the observance of national fasts (vii., viii.). After this, at dates which are not mentioned, this prophet was twice entrusted with “the burden of the word of the Lord,” and uttered two prophecies which are in some respects very difficult to explain, but which contain clear predictions of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.

In our present Half-Hour we shall try to deal with the first two chapters, which contain the introductory exhortation above referred to, and three visions full of “good words and comfortable words” (i. 13) for dejected Zion.

ZECHARIAH i., ii.

¹In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, ²The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. ³Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁴Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. ⁵Your fathers, where *are* they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? ⁶But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

PARAPHRASE.

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, king of Persia, the word of the Lord came unto the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo, saying: Thus shalt thou speak unto the remnant of Judah: Your fathers provoked my sore displeasure, until my wrath arose and there was no remedy. But now, thus saith the Lord of hosts: Return unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not like unto your fathers, unto whom I sent Joel, Amos, Isaiah, and others my servants, crying unto them and saying: Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Repent ye of your evil ways, and forsake your evil deeds. But they refused to hear my voice, and would not hearken to my words, saith the Lord. But where are your fathers now, and where are the prophets that spake unto them? Their life was as a vapour and passed away: but my words live for ever, and pass not away. Did not the judgments which I

threatened overtake your fathers? Yea, in the end they said: The Lord hath accomplished his righteous purpose; he hath dealt with us according to our ways, and recompensed us according to our doings.

Here follows the first vision. Its general meaning is plain, though the interpretation of details is difficult. Sin and judgment have brought the people down into the valley of tribulation; nevertheless the chosen remnant are as a grove of myrtles in the esteem of the Lord of hosts (see Isaiah lv. 13), and among them stands the Angel of his covenant, mounted on a red horse to remind Judah that the Lord is still a man of war, as in the days of Moses and Miriam. This mysterious Angel comes as Captain of the host of the Lord, and is followed by horsemen, who serve him in his capacity of Prince of the kings of the earth. They are mounted on horses of divers colours to shew the diversity of their employments, and they bring word to their glorious leader concerning the state of the heathen powers. Hereupon he intercedes with the Lord of hosts (who can this intercessor be but the one mediator?) on behalf of guilty Jerusalem and afflicted Judah; and his prevailing intercession calls forth from the Lord of hosts good words and comfortable words, which are conveyed to the prophet by the ministering angel who interprets his visions.

This vision was given some three months after the first message of exhortation. Meanwhile God had spoken twice in one day by his servant Haggai, saying, "From this day will I bless you;" and "The Prince of Judah shall be as the signet on my right hand."

⁷ Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, ⁸ "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that *were* in the bottom; and behind him *were there* red horses, speckled,

In the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month of the same year the word of the Lord came again unto the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo: and on this wise came it unto him: I saw a vision in the night season. I looked, and behold, among the myrtles in the valley stood a red horse and his rider; and behind him were horsemen riding on horses of

and white. ⁹ Then said I, O my lord, what *are* these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these *be*. ¹⁰ And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These *are they* whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. ¹¹ And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. ¹² Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? ¹³ And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me *with* good words *and* comfortable words. ¹⁴ So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. ¹⁵ And I am very sore displeased with the heathen *that are* at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. ¹⁶ Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. ¹⁷ Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

various colours, red, and bay and white. And lo, an angel came to speak with me, unto whom I said: What meaneth this vision of horsemen, my lord? And the angel who had come to teach me said, I will show thee: hearken! Then said the rider on the red horse that stood among the myrtle trees: These are the ministering angels of God, whom he hath sent forth to survey the earth. And the riders spake unto their captain, even unto the Angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtles, We have surveyed the whole earth according to thy word, and all the nations are at ease, all the lands have rest from war. Then the Captain of the Lord's host interceded with the Lord, and said: O Lord of hosts, how long? Is it not time for thee to have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, against which thou hast been angry now these seventy years, according to thy word? And the Lord hearkened to the Intercessor, and spake kindly words, words of comfort, unto the angel that taught me. And the angel that taught me told me of the Lord's good words, saying: Cry aloud to the people and say, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous with great jealousy for the welfare of Jerusalem, and the salvation of Zion; and I am angry with the heathen who have trodden down my people, and enjoy their victory in peace: when I employed them for the chastisement of my people, they sought their destruction. Therefore, thus saith the Lord: I will again show mercy to Jerusalem: my temple shall be built therein, saith the Lord of hosts, and the builder's measuring line shall be stretched forth over Jerusalem. Speak

thou therefore again, and cry aloud, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: the cities of my land shall yet again be many and prosperous; yet again shall the Lord comfort Zion, and shall show fresh loving-kindness to the city that he hath chosen.

The second vision (i. 18—21) sets before us another picture of the overthrow of Zion's enemies. The prophet beholds four horns, symbols of the heathen powers that have oppressed Israel and Judah, namely, Chaldeans, Edomites, Moabites, Philistines, &c., who have come from north, south, east, and west to execute God's judgments on his people, and have mercilessly exceeded their commission. On mature reflection we do not think that these four horns mean the four great empires spoken of by Daniel,—Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek, and Roman—but the enemies above mentioned, who came from all quarters to ravage Israel and Judah before the days of Zechariah. Close to each horn in the prophet's vision stands a carpenter, or rather a smith, a brawny workman with uplifted hammer, ready to smash the horn at God's command. God is never at a loss for agents to destroy his people's foes—the Medes and Persians shattered the Babylonian horn so soon as the appointed time was come. [See Daniel v. 28 and 30.] For every horn there is a smith.

¹⁸ Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.

¹⁹ And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What *be* these? And he answered me, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

²⁰ And the Lord shewed me four carpenters. ²¹ Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These *are* the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up *their* horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

I looked, and mine eyes beheld another vision: four horns were before me. Then said I to the angel that taught me, What meaneth this? And he said: These horns are the kingdoms whose armies have scattered Judah and Israel, and have crushed Jerusalem. Then the Lord opened mine eyes, and lo, four workmen stood by the four horns. And I said, For what intent are these come? And he said unto me, The four horns are the powers which have scattered Judah so that none could lift up his head: but the four workmen are the agents that I raise up to destroy the power of the nations which have lifted up their hand to oppress my people.

The next vision is that of a builder commissioned by the Lord to go forth with his measuring line to measure Jerusalem that it may be re-built, a city too populous to be contained by walls, but glorified by the presence of the Lord of hosts in its midst, and protected by his power as by a wall of fire round about it.

¹ I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. ² Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. ³ And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, ⁴ and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: ⁵ For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. ⁶ Ho, ho, *come forth*, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. ⁷ Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest *with* the daughter of Babylon. ⁸ For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. ⁹ For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me. ¹⁰ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. ¹¹ And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee,

Again I looked, and a vision was before me. Behold, a man passed by with a measuring line in his hand, to whom I said, Whither goest thou? He answered: I go to measure the length and breadth of Jerusalem, that it may be rebuilt. Then the angel that taught me went from my side, and was met by another angel who said unto him, Hasten to teach thy disciple what this meaneth: say unto him, Jerusalem shall overflow with inhabitants, even as villages that have no walls; both man and beast shall multiply therein. But I the Lord will be round about her as a wall of fire, and my presence in the midst of her shall be her glory. Ho, ho! return ye to Zion, ye men of Judah that yet linger in Chaldea, saith the Lord. It was I who scattered you to the four winds of heaven, and I bid you return. Ho, daughter of Zion, escape! Dwell no longer at Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: My glory hath appeared in your deliverance, and now my word goeth forth against your enemies, for whoso toucheth you toucheth the apple of mine eye. Behold, I will lift up mine hand against all your foes, and they shall become a prey to those who were their slaves. Then shall ye see and know that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Sing for joy, O Zion, for lo, I come to dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. In that day the Gentiles also shall take my

and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. ¹²And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

¹³ Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.

yoke upon them, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of them: and my people shall know that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Judah shall be mine heritage, saith the Lord: my people shall be my portion in the land that I gave to their fathers, and my favour shall be shown to the city that I have chosen.

Let all flesh be silent before the Lord: for as a mighty man awaketh from his sleep, so the Lord ariseth and cometh forth from his holy habitation.

The literal but partial fulfilment of this prophecy in the days of Nehemiah, Malachi, and the Maccabean princes must not blind us to the fact that it is to be more gloriously fulfilled in the bliss and safety of that holy city whose builder and maker is God.

TWENTY-SIXTH HALF-HOUR.

ZECHARIAH iii. 1—vi. 8.

EZEKIEL said, "Ah, Lord God, they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?" (Ezek. xx. 49). It is evident from this that his contemporaries complained of the obscurity of his teaching. But in this obscurity was hidden the wisdom of God, who had said unto him: "Son of man, put forth a riddle, and speak a parable unto the house of Israel" (Ezek. xvii. 2). So it is with the mysterious visions granted to Zechariah. They are full of the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of the Lord of hosts; and even the efforts which must be made to discover their meaning serve to imprint their lessons more deeply on our hearts.

Three of them have already passed before us; and in the present Half-Hour we shall endeavour to explain the remaining five. Our interpretation is not the only one that might be given, especially in the case of the seventh vision, the ephah full of wickedness which was borne aloft by two

winged women, and carried by them to the land of Shinar ; but we have endeavoured to give, by the prayerful exercise of sober judgment, the most satisfactory interpretation that can be found.

ZECHARIAH iii. i.—vi. 8.

¹ And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. ² And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee : is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? ³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. ⁴ And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. ⁵ And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. ⁶ And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, ⁷ Thus saith the Lord of hosts ; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by. ⁸ Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee : for they are men wondered at : for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH. ⁹ For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua ; upon one stone *shall be* seven eyes : behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that

PARAPHRASE.

I saw in a vision the Angel in whom is the name of the Lord of hosts (Exod. xxiii. 20, 21) [seated on a throne of judgment]. The high priest Joshua, the son of Josedech, stood before him, and the great Accuser stood at his right hand to accuse him. And the Angel of the Lord spake from his throne of judgment, and said unto the Accuser : The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan : yea, the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee : have I not plucked this man as a brand from the burning ? Now Joshua stood before the throne clothed with filthy garments. And the Angel of the Lord spake unto the ministering spirits who waited on him, saying, Take off from him his filthy garments. And to Joshua he said : Lo, I myself have removed thy sin from thee, and I myself will clothe thee with the robe of righteousness, and have given command that a diadem of holiness be placed upon thy head. Then a diadem of holiness was placed upon his head, and he was clothed with change of raiment, while the Angel of the Lord looked on. And he swore unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts : If thou wilt walk in my ways, and keep the charge that I give thee, then shalt thou preside over my house, and minister in my temple ; and I will give thee free access to me among the angels that stand in my presence. Harken unto me, O Joshua, thou and thy fellows that serve with thee in the priesthood : ye are a sign of one that is greater ; for behold, I bring

land in one day. ¹⁰ In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

forth my servant the Branch, the Rod out of the stem of Jesse. Behold, it is I who have laid the foundation-stone of the temple that Joshua the son of Josedech buildeth, and my all-seeing eyes are upon it for good : for a greater stone is here. Behold, I will prepare it and adorn it, and I will suddenly remove the iniquity of my people. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, ye shall feast upon my goodness in peace and safety, as when men feast together under their own vines and their own fig-trees.

Wonderful picture of the restoration of Judah, after its shameful fall and degrading captivity; its enemies are silenced, its guilt taken away, its priesthood cleansed, its access to God renewed, and it feasts in peace and plenty. More wonderful picture of the justification of a sinner before the judgment seat of Christ !

¹ And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, ² and said unto me, What seest thou ? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which *are* upon the top thereof : ³ and two olive trees by it, one upon the right *side* of the bowl, and the other upon the left *side* thereof. ⁴ So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What *are* these, my lord ? ⁵ Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be ? And I said, No, my lord. ⁶ Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁷ Who *art* thou, O great moun-

Again the interpreting angel appeared to me, waking me, as it were, out of my sleep to behold another vision. He said unto me, What seest thou now ? And I said, Behold, a candlestick of pure gold is before mine eyes, and seven lamps stand thereon, even as they stood on the candlestick in the tabernacle of God ; but above it stands a golden bowl from which proceed seven pipes, one to each of the seven lamps. And by it stand two olive trees, one on the right of the bowl and the other on the left. And I turned from the vision to the angel and said, What meaneth this, my lord ? And he said, Knowest thou not ? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he unto me again : Thus saith the Lord unto Zerubbabel : Not by might of man, nor by an arm of flesh, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts shall the temple and city of the Lord be built. Who art thou, O great mountain,

tain? before Zerubbabel *thou shalt become a plain*: and he shall bring forth the headstone *thereof with shoutings, crying*, Grace, grace unto it. ⁸ Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, ⁹ The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. ¹⁰ For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel *with those seven*; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth. ¹¹ Then answered I, and said unto him, What *are* these two olive trees upon the right *side* of the candlestick and upon the left *side* thereof? ¹² And I answered again, and said unto him, What *be these* two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? ¹³ And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these *be*? And I said, No, my lord. ¹⁴ Then said he, These *are* the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

that standest in the way of Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain before him; for he shall bring forth the headstone of the building amid shouts of thanksgiving and triumph. Moreover thus saith the Lord: The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation, and his hands shall finish the house: the issue shall show that the Lord hath spoken it. Yea, those who looked with despondency on his feeble beginnings shall rejoice to see him survey the finished temple. For these seven lamps which thou seest denote the eyes of the all-seeing God which run to and fro through the whole earth [and which safeguard his sanctuary]. Then said I unto him again, What are the two olive trees to the right and left of the candlestick? And again I asked, What mean the two olive branches which, through two golden pipes, empty their own golden oil into the golden bowl? And he said unto me, Knowest thou not? I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones that minister in the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

The golden candlestick is the commonwealth of Israel, the lesser Israel of olden times, and the greater Israel of gospel days, the true circumcision, the Church of the living God. The olive trees are Joshua the anointed priest, and Zerubbabel the anointed prince, channels of blessing to the church in their own day; but both are combined in him who is a priest upon his throne, who hath the fulness of the Spirit, and supplieth life and grace to all his people.

¹ Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. ² And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits,

Again I lifted up mine eyes, and lo, I saw a flying roll. And the angel said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll, twenty cubits long and ten cubits broad. Then said he

and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

⁸ Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth : for every one that stealeth shall be cut off *as* on this side according to it ; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off *as* on that side according to it. ⁴ I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name : and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

The holy place in the tabernacle was twenty cubits long and ten cubits broad, and dust taken from its floor was mingled with water to form the bitter draught that caused the curse to come upon an unfaithful wife (Num. v. 16, 17, 24). The roll of curses was exactly large enough to have carpeted the floor whence that bitter dust was taken. This may be the reason why it was twenty cubits long and ten broad. In any case, this vision teaches that Israel's ruin is the fruit of Israel's sin, and seems to say to the restored nation : Sin no more, lest a worse thing happen to thee.

⁵ Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. ⁶ And I said, What is it ? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. ⁷ And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead : and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. ⁸ And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah ; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. ⁹ Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings ; for they had wings like the wings of a stork :

unto me : This is the curse of God which was published by his servant Moses, and which cometh now upon all the land of Israel. [Read Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii.] It is written back and front with curses, and according to it shall be cut off everyone that loveth not his neighbour as himself, and everyone that profaneth the name of the Lord. It cometh, saith the Lord of hosts, and it entereth into the house of every thief and of every false swearer, there to abide till it consume both roof and foundation.

Then the angel that taught me came forth again, and said unto me : Lift up thine eyes again, and see what this is that goeth forth. And I said, What is it ? And he said : It is an ephah, wherein men measure corn and meal. [See Lev. xix. 36 ; Judges vi. 19 ; Ruth ii. 17 ; and Amos viii. 5.] It signifieth the iniquity of the land, the measure whereof is now full. Behold, I lift up the leaden lid of the ephah, and thou seest that a woman sitteth in the midst of it. He said moreover, This woman is the wickedness of the land. And he thrust her down into the midst of the ephah, and shut her in with the heavy lid of lead. Again I lifted up mine eyes and looked ; and lo, two women came toward

and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. ¹⁰ Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? ¹¹ And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

the ephah with wings swift as the winds of heaven and strong as the pinions of a bird of passage: and they lifted up the ephah to carry it through the air. Then said I unto the angel that taught me: Whither do they carry the ephah? And he said unto me: To Babylon in the land of Shinar. [See Dan. i. 2.] There shall a house be built for wickedness; and when the house is fully reared, it shall be her home for ever.

We know that a state or nation is often spoken of in Scripture under the similitude of a woman; we read of the daughter of Zion, the daughter of Edom, the daughter of Babylon (see Psa. cxxxvii. 8; Lam. iv. 21, 22; Isa. xxxvii. 22). It is easy to see, therefore, that the two winged women of this vision represent two nations, strong and swift as the one referred to in Deut. xxviii. 49, where Moses said to Israel: "The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth." Though this vision may have a prophetic reference to later days, when the measure of Israel's iniquity was again filled up by the murder of Jesus Christ, and the armies of Titus carried the spoils of Jerusalem to Rome, yet it seems to us to refer primarily to the invasions and captivities accomplished by the armies of Assyria and Chaldea; for it is an historic fact that the sin of idolatry was purged out of the land by those afflictions, and has never returned. But we know that Babylon, both literal and mystical, is the settled abode of idolatrous wickedness, "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Rev. xviii. 2). These hints may suffice for our explanation of Zechariah's seventh vision. We pass on to the last of the eight, a vision of chariots drawn by horses of various colours. It will be noticed that the angel, when he interprets the vision, makes no mention of the red horses, probably because they refer to the Chaldean invasion of Judah which was already past. We have ventured to insert in brackets a few words to this effect.

¹ And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, there came four chariots

Once again I lifted up mine eyes and looked; and lo, I saw four chariots which came out from

out from between two mountains; and the mountains *were* mountains of brass. ²In the first chariot *were* red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; ³and in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. ⁴Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What *are* these, my lord? ⁵And the angel answered and said unto me, These *are* the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. ⁶The black horses which *are* therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. ⁷And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. ⁸Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. The first chariot was drawn by red horses, the second by black horses, the third by white horses, and the fourth by strong piebald horses. Then said I unto the angel that taught me, What mean these, my lord? And he answered: These are the four spirits of heaven which go forth from the presence of the Lord, who ruleth by his power in every quarter of the world. [The red horses have already run their course of blood in the overthrow of Israel and Judah.] The chariot with black horses goeth northward into Chaldea, and the white follow them. The fourth chariot, which hath the strong piebald horses, goeth southward into Egypt. The strong horses in this fourth chariot seek to walk to and fro through the earth, and God giveth them permission, saying: "Go forth, and walk to and fro through the earth." So shall they do. Then said he further unto me with a loud voice: Behold they that are gone northward have appeased my wrath, saith the Lord, by executing my judgments on Chaldea.

If we must assign a definite meaning to the four chariots of this vision, perhaps we shall not greatly err in adopting the interpretation of those commentators who see in them the conquering empires of Chaldea, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Certain it is that Chaldea had already deluged the land of Judah with blood; that Persia conquered Chaldea, and also brought fresh tribulation to Judah, riding over it with the black horses of oppression (Ezra iv. 21—24); that the Grecian power under Alexander the Great afterwards showed the Jews much favour, approaching them on the white horses of friendship and peace; and that the Roman rule was destined to bring them many changes with the piebald horses of its changeful government, the strong steeds of its restless, world-roving power. But whether this is the

exact interpretation of the vision or not, it clearly teaches us that God presides over all the revolutions that take place in this lower world, and directs them with infinite power and wisdom to the accomplishment of his purposes of justice and of grace. Men think that blind fortune rules the course of history, and that nations rise and fall at random, as chance will have it; but the prophets of God hear the rumbling of his chariot wheels in the various commotions that shake the earth; they perceive that the angels of his power stand between the brazen mountains of his decrees, ready to do his will at the appointed time.

TWENTY-SEVENTH HALF-HOUR.

ZECHARIAH vi. 9—viii. 23.

IN the days of Zechariah there lived at Jerusalem one whose name was Josiah, a man of whom we only know that he bore also the name of Hen or Chên (*i.e.* Grace), and that his father's name was Zephaniah. To this man's house came three men, Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, bringing from the Jews who still dwelt at Babylon an offering of gold and silver, probably designed to help forward the restoration of the Lord's house at Jerusalem. The God of grace, ever ready to look with favour on a labour of love shown towards his name, took advantage of this event to speak by the mouth of Zechariah concerning the coming and glory of that kingly Priest who should build the true house of God and reign over it for ever. Now was revealed the fact that in his sacred person a "counsel of peace" should be established between kingship and priesthood, so that the king should be priest and the priest king, reconciling for ever in himself the divine attributes of justice and mercy.

ZECHARIAH vi. 9—viii. 23.

⁹And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, ¹⁰Take of *them* of the captivity, *even* of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and

PARAPHRASE.

Moreover the Lord spake unto me, saying, Receive the offering brought from my people in Babylon by their messengers, Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah. Come: go thou this very day to the house

go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; ¹¹ then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and *set* them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; ¹² and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: ¹³ Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. ¹⁴ And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord. ¹⁵ And they *that are far off* shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And *this* shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, whither they are gone to lodge: take of the silver and gold which they have brought, and make thereof a double crown for the high priest Joshua the son of Josedech. Crown him therewith and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold, this man, whose name is the Branch, shall grow up in the place where I have planted him, and shall build my temple. Yea, he shall build my temple, and shall be clothed with honour and majesty, and shall sit and reign upon his throne: his shall be the priesthood and his shall be the kingdom; in him they shall be one. The double crown which thou makest shall be worn by Joshua in my temple, saith the Lord, and it shall be a memorial before me of the love shown to my name by Helem (*i.e.* Heldai), Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Josiah. And I say unto you that the time cometh when the nations that are now far off shall be brought nigh to me, and shall help to form a temple for the habitation of my Spirit. Then shall ye know that the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. Obey ye with diligence the voice of the Lord your God, and his words shall be fulfilled in their season.

This is not the place to dwell on the glory of the kingdom and priesthood of Christ; but as we see them shadowed forth in Joshua the son of Josedech, we rejoice to believe that

“ Though his majesty is great,
Yet his mercy is no less.”

Two years had passed away since the feeble Jews, stirred up by Haggai, and encouraged by Zechariah, had resumed the work of rebuilding the Lord's house. The work must have been making good progress towards completion, for in two more years it was finished, and the top-stone was laid amid shouts of joy. At this time, in the fourth year of Darius, the question arose among the people, “ Why should

we fast and mourn now that the Lord is evidently returning to us, and is giving us renewed prosperity? Hitherto we have fasted in the fourth month because of the capture of Jerusalem (Jer. lii. 6), in the fifth month because of the burning of the temple and the destruction of the city (Jer. lii. 12), in the seventh month because of the murder of Gedaliah and his court (Jer. xli. 1—3), and in the tenth month because it was then that Nebuchadnezzar began the siege (Jer. lii. 4). Shall we continue to observe these fasts, or shall we lay them aside?"

In the second verse of the chapter which we are about to consider (Zech. vii.), our worthy translators have committed the error of translating the word Bethel into its English equivalent. It is true that the word means "House of God," but here, as in other passages, it is the name of a place, and should be left in the untranslated form, Bethel. It is never a pleasant duty, but sometimes, as here, a necessary one, to find fault with our Authorised Version; taking it as a whole we cannot be too thankful for it. The passage in question should be rendered, "When they of Bethel had sent Sherezer," &c.

The men of Bethel, then, being perplexed about these fasts, decided that certain messengers should go up to Jerusalem unto the priests and prophets about this question (compare Acts xv. 2); and the Lord took occasion of this circumstance to send them a message of holy admonition and gracious encouragement, which is recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters of Zechariah.

¹And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, *that* the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth *day* of the ninth month, *even* in Chisleu; ²When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the Lord, ³*and* to speak unto the priests which *were* in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? ⁴Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, ⁵Speak

It came to pass in the fourth year of King Darius that the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is called the month Chisleu. The men of Bethel had sent Sherezer and Regem-melech and others with them to enquire of the Lord through the priests who ministered in the temple and the prophets who prophesied at Jerusalem, saying: Shall we keep the fast of the fifth month with tears and abstinence, as we have done for many years past? Then came unto me the word of the

unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh *month*, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, *even to me*? ⁶ And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat *for yourselves*, and drink *for yourselves*? ⁷ *Should ye not hear* the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when *men* inhabited the south and the plain?

⁸ And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, ⁹ Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: ¹⁰ and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. ¹¹ But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. ¹² Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. ¹³ Therefore it is come to pass, *that* as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts: ¹⁴ but I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

Lord of hosts, saying: Speak unto all the people of the land and to the priests, and say unto them: In your mournful fasts of the fifth and seventh months, observed for the last seventy years, what sincerity of heart have ye shown before me, saith the Lord? And in your eating and drinking, what regard have ye had to my glory? Take good heed to the words which I spake when I cried aloud to you by the former prophets while Jerusalem was yet prosperous and full of people, and the neighbouring cities and the South and the Lowlands were still inhabited.

Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The Lord of hosts spake in time past unto your fathers by the prophets, saying: Judge righteous judgment, and show mercy and compassion every man to his brother: oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, nor the stranger, nor the poor; and let no man devise evil against his brother in his heart. But they would not hearken or obey; they stopped their ears that they might not hear my words. Yea, they hardened their heart like a flint that they might not obey my law, and the words which I sent unto them by my Spirit through the prophets which were in those days: therefore great wrath came upon them from the Lord of hosts. And it came to pass that as they would not hear when the Lord of hosts cried unto them, he said, They shall cry, and I will not hear: I will scatter them as with a whirlwind among the heathen whom they know not. Thus the land from which they were driven became a desolation, a wilderness where no man passed to and fro: for the pleasant land which I had given them was laid waste.

¹ Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, ² Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. ³ Thus saith the Lord; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts the holy mountain. ⁴ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. ⁵ And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. ⁶ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts. ⁷ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; ⁸ and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. ⁹ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. ¹⁰ For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour. ¹¹ But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. ¹² For the seed shall be prosperous;

The Lord spake further unto me and said, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: I am jealous with great jealousy for the welfare of my people, and I am jealous with great fury against their enemies. Thus saith the Lord: I have returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of the city which I had forsaken: Jerusalem shall be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the Lord of hosts shall be called the Mountain of Holiness. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The streets of Jerusalem shall again be trodden by aged men and women. Its citizens shall come to extreme old age in peace, and shall pass along the streets staff in hand; and troops of children shall play happily and safely in the squares. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: If this seemeth impossible in these days to the remnant of this people, shall it also be impossible with me, saith the Lord of hosts? Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Behold, I will say unto the east, Give up, and unto the west, Keep not back; I will bring my people, and they shall again dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be my people, and I will be their God, and truth and righteousness shall reign among them. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Be of good courage, ye that now hear these my words from the mouth of my prophets, who have prophesied at the laying of the foundation of my house that the temple of the Lord of hosts might be built. Hitherto man and beast have tilled the land in vain, for I have withheld my blessing: there has been no peace abroad or at home because of the enemy: and I have chastened the land with internal strife and division. But now I

the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these *things*. ¹⁸ And it shall come to pass, *that* as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, *but* let your hands be strong. ¹⁴ For thus saith the Lord of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not: ¹⁵ so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. ¹⁶ These *are* the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: ¹⁷ and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these *are things* that I hate, saith the Lord.

¹⁸ And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me saying, ¹⁹ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; The fast of the fourth *month*, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. ²⁰ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; *It shall yet come to pass*, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: ²¹ and the inhabitants of one *city* shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. ²² Yea, many people

will change my dealings with this people, saith the Lord of hosts. The seed that is sown shall prosper; the vine shall give its fruit; the earth shall give its increase; the heaven shall give its dew; and I will give all these mercies as a heritage to the remnant of this people. And it shall come to pass that, as your name stood for a by-word and a curse among the nations, O Judah and Israel, so shall it stand for a blessing; for I will save you. Fear ye not, but be of good courage. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: As when your fathers provoked me to wrath I resolved to do evil unto you, and repented not, saith the Lord of hosts, so have I resolved in these days to do good unto Jerusalem and Judah: fear ye not. And these are my statutes which ye shall keep: speak the truth every man with his neighbour in your daily life: judge true and wholesome judgment in your courts of law; imagine no evil in your hearts against your neighbours; and love not to swear falsely: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord of hosts.

Moreover, as touching the fasts the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts: The fasts which the men of the house of Judah have held in the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months shall be changed into joy and gladness and cheerful feasts; therefore love ye to walk in truth and peace. Thus saith the Lord of hosts: Even yet shall nations come, and the people of many cities; and the people of one city shall say to the people of another, Let us go speedily to seek the favour of the Lord of hosts, and to enquire in his temple; and one man shall

and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. ²⁸ Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days *it shall come to pass*, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard *that* God is with you.

say to another, I will go also. Yea, many peoples and mighty nations shall come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord of hosts and to entreat his favour. For thus saith the Lord of hosts: It shall come to pass in those days that ten men from among the nations, each speaking a different language, shall come and shall cleave unto one that is a Jew, and shall say unto him, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you, and that salvation is of the Jews.

Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. The conversion of the Gentiles could scarcely be described in plainer words. Let us, who are gathered from among the heathen to taste the feast of fat things which God has made in Zion, take heed that we do in our daily life those things which please the Lord of hosts.

TWENTY-EIGHTH HALF-HOUR.

ZECHARIAH ix., x., xi.

WE have said that "the burden of the word of the Lord" was twice entrusted to the prophet Zechariah after he had delivered the messages which are recorded in the first eight chapters. But though he only twice uses that expression (ix. 1 and xii. 1), it seems clear from the various changes of subject that the last six chapters contain several distinct prophecies uttered on different occasions. In the three chapters to which our present Half-Hour will be devoted we have first a prediction of the overthrow of various enemies of the Jews (ix. 1—8); secondly, a prophecy of the coming and triumph of Christ (ix. 9—17); thirdly, a promise of the future restoration of Judah and Israel (x.); and fourthly, a parabolic prophecy which is in some respects very difficult to interpret, but which clearly foretells the rejection and betrayal of the Good Shepherd, and the terrible judgments that should follow (xi.)

The land of Hadrach mentioned at the beginning of the ninth chapter is part of Syria. Though the name does not occur elsewhere in the Bible, it has been found in inscriptions on Assyrian monuments.

ZECHARIAH ix., x., xi.

¹The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus *shall be* the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, *shall be* toward the Lord. ²And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. ³And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. ⁴Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. ⁵Ashkelon shall see *it*, and fear; Gaza also *shall see it*, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. ⁶And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. ⁷And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, *shall be* for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. ⁸And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

PARAPHRASE.

The Lord layeth a woe upon Syria, and the burden of his word shall rest upon Damascus: for the Lord, who watcheth Israel, hath his eye upon all nations. Hamath also, which bordereth upon Syria, shall share the judgment thereof: and the wisdom of Tyre and Sidon shall not save them. Tyre hath surrounded herself with bulwarks, and hath heaped up silver as dust, and gold as the mire in the streets. Behold, the Lord will take away her riches, and will hurl her ramparts into the sea: she shall be consumed with fire. Then the cities of Philistia shall see it, and shall be filled with fear and anguish: because Tyre, on whose power they leaned for help, is fallen. Gaza shall lose its king, and Ashkelon its people: Ashdod shall pass into the hands of strangers. Thus will I cut off the pride of the Philistines; I will stop their bloody victories, and snatch their prey from between their teeth. And the remnant of them shall be subject unto our God, and shall be tributary to his people: they of Ekron shall be under the government of Judah as were the Jebusites of old. And I the Lord will encamp about my dwelling-place, and will defend it, that the armies of the enemy march not to and fro through the land. No oppressor shall pass through it any more: for I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people.

Do the above words foretell the conversion of a remnant of the Philistines to the kingdom of God? Calvin says, no; Gill says, yes; we leave it undecided. It is quite clear,

however, that the Lord here promises to deliver his people from the enemies that surround them. The prophecy of the destruction of Philistia's ally, the proud island-city of Tyre, was fulfilled in every detail by Alexander the Great. (See also page 51 of this book.)

⁹ Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. ¹⁰ And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion *shall be* from sea *even* to sea, and from the river *even* to the ends of the earth. ¹¹ As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. ¹² Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare *that* I will render double unto thee; ¹³ when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. ¹⁴ And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. ¹⁵ The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, *and* make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, *and* as the corners of the altar. ¹⁶ And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for *they shall be as* the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. ¹⁷ For

Be exceeding glad, O Zion; shout for joy, O Jerusalem. For behold, thy King cometh unto thee, a just King and a Saviour. He is lowly, and rideth upon an ass, yea, upon an ass's colt. In his days Ephraim shall trust no longer in chariots, Judah shall no longer rely on horses, nor prevail with bow and arrow: for he shall reign in peace over the nations; his kingdom shall stretch from east to west, and from north to south. And as for thee, O Zion, because I have made a covenant with thee, and ratified it by the shedding of blood, therefore will I deliver thy captives from the dungeons wherein they have languished. Return, ye prisoners, whose hope is in your God, return ye to that city whose walls are salvation: even now do I declare that for your shame ye shall have the reward of a rich inheritance. Judah shall be as a bended bow in mine hand, and Ephraim as mine arrow: I will show myself as the captain of my people, saith the Lord, and will send forth mine arrow as the lightning-flash. The Lord God shall sound the advance, and shall march before his army in the whirlwind of his power. The Lord of hosts shall be their defence, and they shall consume their enemies and trample on their weapons. They shall drink the blood of the slain, and shout as a mighty man shouteth by reason of wine; yea, the blood of their conquered foes shall flow as flows the blood of victims in the sacrificial bowls, or

how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

on the horns of the altar. The Lord God of Israel shall save them in that day as his own flock; he shall set them as jewels in his crown to glitter in the land that he hath given them. Great shall be their prosperity, and great their glory; young men and maidens shall rejoice and flourish because of the abundance of corn and wine.

It is scarcely needful to assign a definite spiritual significance to every detail of the above prophecy. We may safely say that it foretells, under the image of great temporal prosperity, the blessings of that kingdom which was to be set up by the coming of the Prince of Peace. Even the prediction of the overthrow of Zion's enemies, though partly accomplished by the victories recorded in the first book of the Maccabees, has had a further fulfilment in the subjugation of the Gentiles by the power of the gospel, the bloodless victories of the ambassadors of Christ.

The next prophecy (ch. x.) seems to look onward to that restoration of Israel which is again foretold in Romans xi.

¹ Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. ² For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because *there was no shepherd*. ³ Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. ⁴ Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together. ⁵ And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down *their enemies* in the mire of the streets

O house of Israel, ask ye of the Lord [and no longer of your idol gods] the rain that ye need for the ripening of the harvest. He it is that maketh the lightnings and the storm-clouds; and he shall give you showers, and plentiful crops in your fields. For your idols have spoken vanity, and your false seers have seen a lie: they have related vain dreams, and have given you false comfort. Therefore my people have been driven from their land like scattered sheep, as sheep without a shepherd. Mine anger hath been kindled against the shepherds of my flock (Jer. xxiii.), against the kings and their cruel nobles. My flock is the house of Judah, and the time is come for me to visit it: it shall be strong and victorious; it shall be as the Lord's battle-horse. From Judah

in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded. ⁶And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I *am* the Lord their God, and will hear them. ⁷And *they* of Ephraim shall be like a mighty *man*, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see *it*, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. ⁸I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. ⁹And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. ¹⁰I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and *place* shall not be found for them. ¹¹And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. ¹²And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.

shall proceed the headstone of the corner, the tentpegs of my tabernacle, my weapons of war, and the leaders of my people. They shall be as mighty warriors, treading down their foes like mire in the battle. They shall fight and prevail, for I am with them, saith the Lord; and their foes, though they ride upon horses, shall be confounded. For I will strengthen Judah, and will save Israel; I will bring them back to their own land. I will have mercy upon them, and they shall be as though I had never cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear their prayer. The men of Israel shall be like mighty warriors, and their heart shall rejoice as if merry with wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad, and their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. I will summon them from far, and will gather them together: for I have redeemed them, and they shall multiply as the stars of heaven, even as in former days. Though I have scattered them among the nations, they shall remember me in the land of their exile; they and their children shall live, and shall return to Zion. Even from the land of Egypt will I bring them back, and will gather them from Assyria: I will bring them to the land of their fathers, and it shall be too small to contain them. I will make a way for them through the barrier of the sea, and will divide its waves as of old. I will dry up the deep waters of the Nile; I will bring down the pride of Assyria; and the power of Egypt shall be no more. I myself will be the strength of my people, and they shall walk at large in my name, saith the Lord.

In sundry places and in divers manners God hath spoken of the return of Israel to their own land: the manner and

extent of this wonderful restoration, which is to be as life from the dead, will not be fully known until it is accomplished.

After such a prophecy of good things to come, who would have expected a sad prediction of sin unutterable and disaster irremediable? Yet the next chapter tells how the Good Shepherd should be rejected, and how the nation should in consequence be judicially given over to the power of evil, to those who should rule them with force and with cruelty (Ezek. xxxiv. 4). Before attempting a continuous paraphrase of the eleventh chapter, we will endeavour to clear away some of the difficulties which beset its interpretation by giving a short sketch of its drift and meaning.

First the prophet addresses the Jewish nation as if it were a fortified park: the princes are compared to stately cedars, the nobles and common people to oaks and fir trees. Its gates are to be thrown wide open; the fire of war is to enter; the cedars are to be consumed, and the trembling oaks and firs are to bewail their fall. The shepherds, the head men of the state, are to lament over the work of the spoiler; and the young lions of the Jordan thickets, the cruel and rapacious nobles, are to roar with terror as the flame reaches their lurking place. This gloomy forecast certainly had one fulfilment in the days of vengeance which followed the death of Christ.

Next the Lord bids the prophet assume the character of a good shepherd; and in this character he sends him to the flock whose shepherds slaughter them, the oppressed Jews, it may be, of Zechariah's own later days. The prophet obeys: he takes two shepherd's crooks, one of which he labels Pleasantness, and the other Unity. He goes to the people and covenants with them to perform the part of a good shepherd over them, leading them to good pastures of grace and peace. Being temporarily accepted by the people, he shows his loving care for the flock by removing from office three evil shepherds whose names are not recorded. But he is grieved by the perversity of the flock, and they grow weary of his rule. They reject the good shepherd, and he gives them over to death by mutual destruction. Just before his definite rejection he breaks his crook labelled Pleasantness, to foretell the break that is about to take place between him and the people, and on that same day they formally depose

him from his office. By the fact that this prediction is fulfilled the same day, the poor of the flock perceive that he is a true prophet of God, whose words do not fall to the ground. Zechariah next asks those who have dismissed him to pay him for the labour which he has expended upon them, and they contemptuously give him thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave. The Lord instructs him to cast this insulting reward to the potter, perhaps to pay for a few pots used in the service of the temple. The prophet now breaks the crook which he has labelled Unity, to show that henceforth the guilty people should be ruined by internal dissension. This symbolic prophecy, which was probably a real public transaction like Isaiah's walking barefoot three years (Isaiah xx.), reminds us of the evil returns made by Israel to its God from the day when he brought them out of Egypt, but has its chief fulfilment in the rejection and betrayal of the Good Shepherd (Matt. xxvii. 9, 10).

Finally the Lord saith to the prophet: They have rejected thee as a good shepherd; they will none of my favour, and they hate unity. Go before them, therefore, in the character of a worthless shepherd, and say unto them: The Lord shall in judgment give you over into the hands of wicked rulers; yet woe unto the shepherds that shall oppress Israel!

Let us now attempt a closer paraphrase.

¹Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. ²Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. ³*There is* a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

⁴Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; ⁵whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not. ⁶For I will no more pity

Open thy gates, thou park of the mountains, and let the fire enter to consume thy cedars! Wail, ye fir trees; for the cedars of Lebanon are fallen, the mighty are brought low; wail, ye oaks of Bashan, for the fortified forest is taken, and its cedars are felled! How do the shepherds lament the downfall of their pride: how do the young lions roar at the destruction of the thickets of Jordan!

The Lord my God hath bidden me take the oversight of those who are accounted as sheep for the slaughter; whose owners slay them, and say, We have not sinned: sell them and say, God be praised that we thus become rich. They that should be their

the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver *them*. ⁷ And I will feed the flock of slaughter, *even* you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. ⁸ Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me. ⁹ Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. ¹⁰ And I took my staff, *even* Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. ¹¹ And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that *it was* the word of the Lord. ¹² And I said unto them, If ye think good, give *me* my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty *pieces* of silver. ¹³ And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty *pieces* of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. ¹⁴ Then I cut asunder mine other staff, *even* Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

shepherds pity them not. [Go to them as a shepherd kind and peaceful, and they will reject thee, for they have rejected me, and will reject my anointed.] Therefore I will no longer pity the inhabitants of this land, saith the Lord; but lo, I will give up every man to be oppressed by his neighbour, and the whole land to be oppressed by its rulers. They shall smite the land, and I will not deliver the people out of their hand. So I, Zechariah, undertook the care of the oppressed people, and especially of the poor of the flock. I took into mine hands two crooks; the one I called the crook of Pleasantness, and the other the crook of Unity. I became a shepherd to the flock, and in the short space of a month I removed three evil shepherds; but the foolish flock rejected me: I became weary of their folly, and they became weary of my care. Then I said, I will no longer be your shepherd: those that are to die, let them die; those that are to be cut off, let them be cut off, and let the remnant destroy one another. [Terribly fulfilled in the last siege of Jerusalem, when fierce factions drenched the city with blood while the Roman army lay around its walls.] So I broke to pieces the crook of Pleasantness, to show they would reject me, that my covenant to be their shepherd would come to an end: and on the same day this prediction was accomplished, for they openly rejected me. Thus the poor of the flock who gave heed to me knew that I was a true prophet. Then said I unto the people: If ye think fit, pay me for the labour that I have bestowed upon you; but if not, forbear to do so. And they gave me for a prophet's wages thirty pieces of silver!

¹⁵ And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. ¹⁶ For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, *which* shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. ¹⁷ Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword *shall be* upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

Then said the Lord unto me: 'A goodly price at which to value the Good Shepherd! Cast it to the potter.' So I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the temple courts. Then broke I to pieces the other crook, the crook of Unity, to show that henceforth there should be no peace among the remnants of Judah and Israel.

Furthermore the Lord said unto me: Take up now the implements and character of a worthless shepherd. For behold I will give them in mine anger shepherds who shall not search out the lost, nor seek the young, nor heal the injured, nor feed the healthy; but shall devour the flesh of the fat sheep, and scatter the flock on the rugged mountains. Yet woe to the worthless shepherd who shall be thus faithless to his charge! A curse on his arm and on his right eye! The arm of his power shall wither, and the eye of his understanding shall be darkened.

This last prediction has been thought to refer especially to the papal power. Probably this is not its primary meaning; but certainly he who at his installation is exalted on the high altar of St. Peter's to receive the adoration of the assembled cardinals is well worthy of the title of a worthless shepherd, or even, as our Authorised Version has it, "an idol shepherd." See the late Bishop Wordsworth's comments on this passage in his edition of the Bible.

The Lord grant unto us the spirit of obedience to the Good Shepherd, and then, if in this world we share his reproach, we shall share his glory in the world to come.

TWENTY-NINTH HALF-HOUR.

ZECHARIAH xii., xiii., xiv.

It has been well said concerning the last three chapters of Zechariah that, whatever view may be taken of them, it cannot be denied that there is a striking agreement between their predictions and the course of Jewish history from the times of Ezra and Nehemiah to the coming of Christ; and that while this interpretation of them does not remove all difficulties, it leaves less unexplained than any other. It seems only reasonable to suppose that, when the voice of prophecy was about to cease for four centuries, its concluding utterances would bear upon the things that should befall God's chosen nation before he again opened his mouth to speak unto them by his Son.

For about a hundred years the Jews seem to have enjoyed much peace and prosperity, being treated with more or less kindness and forbearance by Persia, Greece, Egypt, and Syria, as these nations successively rose to power. But in the struggle for predominance, which took place between the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucid kings of Syria, Judæa was the scene of many bloody battles and suffered much hardship. Moreover the office of the High-priesthood, carrying with it at this time some semblance of royalty, was a prize which excited the ambition of rival candidates, whose factious adherents filled the nation and its capital with strife and confusion. The common people also declined from the observance of religion, and the wickedness of the land again called for punishment. Then came upon them (B.C. 169) a terrible persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes, king of Syria. He plundered Jerusalem and its temple with the most savage cruelty, stopped the offering of the daily sacrifice, erected the statue of one of the heathen gods on the altar of burnt offering, compelled the Jews under pain of death to sacrifice to idols, and sought to destroy the Mosaic worship by burning up every copy of the law that could be found. (See 1 Macc. i. 44, &c.) Zech. xiv. 1, 2 may be looked upon as a prediction of these awful days, whatever further fulfilment that prediction may have.

Then came the courageous resistance of the priest Mattathias, and the glorious victories of his son Judas Maccabæus, by

which the Lord delivered the people and the city from the tyranny of Antiochus. (See Zech. xii. 8.)

Without pretending to solve all the difficulties connected with the interpretation of this most difficult part of the oracles of God, we venture to express the deliberate conviction that it foretells the Lord's care over his afflicted people during the dark days above referred to, and also the final triumph of the kingdom of Christ, both in this world and in the world that is to come.

The twelfth and thirteenth chapters seem to form a complete prophecy, foretelling the conflicts of Judah during the days of waiting for redemption; the piercing of Messiah's side and the grief of his repentant murderers; the opening of the fountain of atonement; the repression of false prophets and teachers by the purity of apostolic doctrine; and the fiery trials which should come upon the Church after the death and departure of her Redeemer. As it is inexpedient to interrupt our paraphrase with explanations which tend to divert the reader's mind from continuous attention to the prophet's message, let us here consider briefly two difficulties which present themselves in the following prophecy.

I. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him" (xii. 10). Why "me" and "him" when the same person is meant? Two explanations may be given. A single stroke in a Hebrew manuscript would make the passage read thus: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced," and then all would be plain. This stroke is actually found in some manuscripts, and apparently was in that which was used by the evangelist John. (See John xix. 37.) Another view of this passage is that the word "pierced" refers primarily and historically to the various provocations of which the children of Israel had been guilty throughout the whole course of their national life: "You have pierced me continually," said their kind and long-suffering God, "yet you shall look unto me, shall turn unto Me, again;" and that the words are at the same time designed by the Spirit of God to be a prophecy of the piercing of the side of Christ. There is nothing in this view at variance with the style of prophetic diction; and it would be easy to confirm it by quoting similar instances. We shall endeavour to embody it in our paraphrase, introducing only such additional words as are necessary to convey it.

II. The second difficulty occurs in the sixth verse of the thirteenth chapter: "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thy hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." It is very natural to suppose that this refers to the crucifixion of Christ, whose hands were pierced by his own countrymen, and by those whom he came to save. We believe, however, that this is not the mind of the Spirit in the words before us. What we wish to say has been so well said by the learned translator of Calvin's Commentary on Zechariah, that we will simply quote his words. They will show that we are by no means singular in our explanation of this passage. We may add that Dr. Gill apparently takes the same view, although, according to his custom, he mentions several other interpretations. "The obvious meaning is that stated by Calvin, that they were the wounds inflicted by the nearest relatives, particularly mentioned in the third verse, 'his father and his mother shall pierce him.' Marckius, Adam Clarke, and Henderson agree with Calvin in repudiating the notion that this verse is to be understood of the crucifixion of our Saviour, a notion commonly entertained by papal expositors; but Henry and Scott refer to the sentiment without condemning or approving it. Both Jerome and Theodoret refer the words, as is done here, to the punishment inflicted on a false prophet by his parents; and it is strange that any sound expounder could do otherwise."

ZECHARIAH xii., xiii., xiv.

¹ The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel,

Saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. ² Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. ³ And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people

PARAPHRASE.

The burden of the word of the Lord concerning the afflictions of his people Israel, and their deliverance therefrom.

Thus saith the Lord who stretched out the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth, and breathed into man the breath of life, the Almighty: Behold, I will cause Jerusalem to be unto all her foes round about as a cup of the wine of my wrath, and the apostates of Judah shall also drink thereof when they shall aid Jerusalem's enemies. Yea, then shall it come to pass that Jerusalem shall be unto all the nations a stone too heavy to be

of the earth be gathered together against it. ⁴In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. ⁵And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem *shall be* my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. ⁶In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, *even* in Jerusalem. ⁷The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify *themselves* against Judah. ⁸In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David *shall be* as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. ⁹And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. ¹⁰And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for *his* only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for *his* firstborn. ¹¹In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. ¹²And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the

borne; all that seek to remove it shall be crushed under its weight, though all the nations of the earth shall gather together to destroy her. I will smite the horses of the foe in that day with stupor, and their riders with confusion; for I will look with favour on the house of Judah, and will destroy the armies of the heathen. Then shall each of the captains of Judah say in his heart, I shall prevail by the help of the men of Jerusalem, for the Lord of hosts is their God. In that day, saith the Lord, I will make the captains of Judah like fire among wood, or a torch among sheaves: they shall consume all their enemies round about, on the right hand and on the left; and Jerusalem shall yet again be filled with inhabitants, and shall stand where Jerusalem stood of old. And the Lord shall deliver first the country-folk of Judah, that the princes of the house of David and the citizens of Jerusalem may not exalt themselves above the people of Judah. And then will I defend the men of Jerusalem, saith the Lord, and will make the feeblest of them to be mighty as David; and the royal house shall be strong in the strength of God, even of the Angel that led Israel through the wilderness. For in that day I will watch to bring destruction upon all the enemies of Jerusalem. But upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem I will pour out my Spirit, who shall fill them with grace and prayer; and they shall look unto me whom they have provoked, and upon my Son whom they shall have pierced: then shall they mourn for having pierced him, as one mourneth the death of his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one

family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; ¹³the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; ¹⁴all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. ¹In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.

that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, such as hath not been since they mourned for Josiah at Hadadrimmon, in the valley of Megiddo. [See 2 Chron. xxxv. 22—25, and Acts ii. 37.] Each family of the land shall mourn for its own sin. The men of the house of David shall mourn apart and their women apart [as, in the days of Joel, the bridegroom came forth of his chamber to fast, and the bride out of her closet]; and the family of each son of David shall mourn apart, and the women thereof apart [for Nathan, see 2 Sam. v. 14]. The men of the house of Levi shall mourn apart, and their women apart: the family of each son of Levi apart, and the women thereof apart [for Shimei see Num. iii. 18]; yea, every family that shall then remain in the land shall mourn apart, and its women apart. And a fountain shall be opened wherein the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall wash away the uncleanness of all their sin.

²And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, *that* I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. ³And it shall come to pass, *that* when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. ⁴And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath pro-

And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will remove from the people of the land all false worship, so that the names of their idols shall be remembered no more; and I will remove from the land the false prophets and the unclean spirits that possessed them. And if any one of them shall yet prophesy falsely, his own parents shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord. Yea, his own parents shall fulfil my law, and shall slay him when he prophesieth falsely. [See Deut. xiii. 6—11.] It shall also come to pass that the prophets shall be ashamed of the lying

phesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: ⁵but he shall say, I *am* no prophet, I *am* an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. ⁶And *one* shall say unto him, What *are* these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, *Those* with which I was wounded *in* the house of my friends.

⁷Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man *that is* my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. ⁸And it shall come to pass, *that* in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off *and* die; but the third shall be left therein. ⁹And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It *is* my people: and they shall say, The Lord *is* my God.

visions which they have uttered: they shall no longer deceive by wearing a prophet's mantle: but each shall confess, I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground; from my youth up I have been a husbandman's servant. And when he is asked, What are these wounds upon thy hands? he shall answer and say, My parents inflicted them because I was a false prophet.

And I, the Lord of hosts, will command the sword of my justice to awake against the shepherd of my flock, against the man that is my fellow. The shepherd shall be smitten, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad; but I will keep the lambs in my own name. In the days of vengeance which shall follow that day, saith the Lord, the greater part of the nation shall perish, but a remnant shall be preserved. This remnant will I bring through the fire of tribulation, refining them as silver and proving them as gold: they shall call upon my name, and I will hear and answer. I will say, Ye are my people; and they shall say, Thou art our God.

It appears to us that the remainder of Zechariah's prophecy (ch. xiv.) covers, to a certain extent, the same ground; but looks onward more distinctly to the glorious light which should break in upon Zion's eventide, the brilliant dawn of her eternal morning, that morning without clouds, or rather that celestial noon, which shall behold no Canaanite in the city of the Lord of hosts.

But how are we to interpret the prediction that the Lord Himself should stand on the Mount of Olives and cleave it by an earthquake into two mountains with a valley between them which should reach unto Azal? We know nothing of Azal beyond the fact that commentators cannot agree about it. If it be the name of a real place, that place is lost in the mists of antiquity. Are we to look upon the passage as a figurative prediction of the great spiritual

deliverance which was wrought by Christ at his first coming, or of the final deliverance of his ransomed people, which will be accomplished when he shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation? Or, yet again, are we to take it as a prediction which will be literally fulfilled when Christ shall so come in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven? For our own part, though we would not dogmatize, we incline to the first of these three views, because this fits in best with the subsequent portion of this prophecy, which foretells the rise and progress of the gospel, (the river of living water which should flow from Jerusalem eastward and westward to the nations of the earth,) and the destruction or conversion of the enemies of the church of God. We hope that these remarks will throw some light on a passage of very unusual difficulty.

¹ Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. ² For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. ⁴ And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, *and there shall be a very great valley*; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. ⁵ And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, *and all the saints with thee.* ⁶ And

Behold, I will bring a day, saith the Lord, when the enemy shall spoil Jerusalem and divide the spoil in her streets. For I will gather all nations together to fight against her: they shall capture the city, rifle the houses, dishonour the women, and carry into captivity half of the inhabitants; but a residue shall yet be left therein which shall not be cut off. Then the Lord shall arise and fight against those nations, as when he fought for Israel in the days of old. He shall set his feet on the Mount of Olives which lieth to the east of the city, and shall cleave the mountain in twain by a very great valley running east and west. Half of the mountain shall be removed toward the north, and half towards the south, and men shall flee along the valley between the two mountains; for the valley shall reach unto Azal, and the men of Jerusalem shall flee along it as when they fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah (Amos i. 1): and the Lord God of the holy prophets shall

it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, nor dark: ⁷but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, *that* at evening time it shall be light. ⁸And it shall be in that day, *that* living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. ⁹And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one. ¹⁰All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and *from* the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. ¹¹And *men* shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

¹²And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. ¹³And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. ¹⁴And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round

come, and all his holy ones with him. And it shall come to pass at that time that the day shall neither be bright nor dark: and in one day known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but a time of twilight gloom, it shall be light at eventide. [After a period of desertion the people that sat in darkness shall see a great light.] And it shall come to pass in that day that the river of the water of life shall go forth from Jerusalem to all nations east and west, and shall flow perpetually, neither dried up by summer, nor ice-bound by winter. And the kingdom of God shall extend to all nations; one Lord shall be worshipped, and his name alone revered. Every mountain round about Jerusalem to north and south shall be brought low, and the city shall be exalted. She shall be established in her own place as of old, in the whole of her breadth from west to east, and in the whole of her length from north to south. She shall be filled with citizens, and never again be given to destruction: Jerusalem shall for ever abide in safety.

The Lord shall smite with a plague all those that have made war on his holy city: an unseen curse shall waste their flesh while they stand upon their feet, shall waste their eyes in their sockets, and shall waste their tongues in their mouths. It shall also be that a tumult of dissension shall go forth among them from the Lord, and they shall rise up every one against his fellow, and every man's hand shall be lifted up to smite his fellow. Some even of the tribe of Judah will fight as traitors against Jerusalem, and wealthy nations, with abundance of gold, silver, and

about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. ¹⁵ And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague. ¹⁶ And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. ¹⁷ And it shall be, *that* whoso will not come up of *all* the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. ¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, *that have no rain*; there shall be the plague, where-with the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

²⁰ In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. ²¹ Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

apparel, will rise up against her, not to plunder but to kill. But the plague which consumeth the men shall be upon all their force of horses, of mules, of camels, of asses, and upon all the beasts in their camps. After this the remnant of these hostile nations shall turn to the Lord, and from year to year shall worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even as Israel of old when it kept the feast of tabernacles. [The enemies of the church shall be consumed or converted, and all nations shall learn to worship the true God.] And it shall come to pass that whoso, of all the families of the earth, is not found among the worshippers of the King, the Lord of hosts, shall be destroyed by drought. If the Egyptians [who depend upon the Nile] turn not to the worship of the Lord, they also shall be destroyed by drought, and by the plague where-with the Lord will consume the nations that serve him not. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and of every nation that shall refuse to worship the true God.

In that day the very horses of my worshippers shall be sanctified to my service, even as was Aaron in my tabernacle, saith the Lord; and the meanest pot in my temple shall be counted holy, even as the bowls which are used at my altar; yea, every vessel in all my holy city and all my holy nation, shall be sanctified unto me, and all they that come to worship me shall use them in my service. In that day the uncircumcised and the unclean shall no more be found in the temple of the Lord of hosts.

Into the holy city, the new Jerusalem, shall enter nothing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie.

THIRTIETH HALF-HOUR.

MALACHI.

WHEN at Mount Horeb Israel trembled at the majesty of God and said: Let me not hear the voice of my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not, the Lord said unto Moses, They have well spoken that which they have spoken: I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, and I will put my words into his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

This gracious promise was far-reaching, and was abundantly fulfilled. We know from Peter's testimony (Acts iii. 22) that its chief and final fulfilment was the sending into this world of God's only-begotten Son to be the Prophet of his Israel. But in the long ages which intervened between Moses and Christ the Lord fulfilled his word by sending to his people a succession of holy prophets to enforce his law and to unfold the mysteries of his grace. The last of this long chain of inspired messengers was Malachi. By him the Lord spake with intent to speak no more till John the Baptist should be sent to prepare the way before Messiah's face. Through the gloom of four centuries, which were to be darkened with the wickedness of man and the frown of God, the last of the prophets saw from far the brightness of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and the night of eternal woe that should come upon the vanquished powers of darkness (Mal. iv. 1—3).

It has been wisely said that the best commentator on Malachi is Nehemiah. The evils which the prophet was sent to reprove are the same as those with which the reformer had to contend: the ingratitude of the nation; the unfaithfulness of the priests to the covenant between the Lord and the house of Levi; the unfaithfulness of the people to the covenant between the Lord and the house of Israel. The priests are exhorted to administer the law with holy fidelity and impartiality as in the days of old; the people are forbidden to break their marriage covenant with their Israelitish wives, and to marry heathen women, the daughters not of the Lord but of a strange god. Thus the whole prophecy is full of reproof for priests and people; but at the same time it is enriched with exceeding great and precious promises to those who turned from their evil ways, feared the Lord, and thought with reverence on his great name.

The few difficulties of interpretation which occur seem to be due to our ignorance of the meaning of certain forms of expression which were probably in general use at the time, and well understood by those to whom the prophet spoke. Our paraphrase gives what appears to us to be the best interpretation. If our readers would see other views which have been taken of these difficult passages, we refer them to more elaborate commentaries.

MALACHI.

¹The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

²I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was not Esau Jacob's brother?* saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, ³and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. ⁴Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever. ⁵And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel.

PARAPHRASE.

The message from the Lord which Malachi was charged to deliver unto Israel.

I have loved you, O house of Jacob, saith the Lord; and yet ye ask, What hast thou done to show that thou lovest us? Were not Esau and Jacob twin brothers? Yet I loved Jacob and hated Esau. And though I gave the mountains of Seir as a heritage to Esau's children, yet I have given this heritage over to desolation, and have made it a home for the jackals of the desert. Though the Edomites say, We will build again our wasted and ruined cities, the Lord of hosts saith: Let them build; I will throw down; they shall be known as the land of wickedness, the people whose sins have brought upon them my eternal indignation. And ye shall behold it with your eyes and say: The Lord shall be magnified beyond the land of Israel.

Thus the Lord begins his reproof of his chosen people by reminding them of the sovereignty and faithfulness of his electing love. We have endeavoured to make plain the literal meaning of this passage, which will be plainer still if the reader will turn to the slight sketch of Edom's history given in our exposition of Obadiah. The spiritual significance of the prophet's words is unfolded by the apostle Paul in the ninth chapter of his epistle to the Romans. Let us observe that it is the border of wickedness against which the Lord hath indignation for ever. Election saves: sin destroys.

Now the Lord passes on to rebuke the ingratitude of his

chosen nation, to which he had been a kind Father and a gracious Master.

⁶A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? ⁷Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord *is* contemptible. ⁸And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, *is it* not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, *is it* not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts. ⁹And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts. ¹⁰Who *is there* even among you that would shut the doors *for nought*? neither do ye kindle *fire* on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. ¹¹For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name *shall be* great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense *shall be* offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name *shall be* great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. ¹²But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord *is* polluted; and the fruit thereof, *even* his meat, *is* contemptible. ¹³Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness *is it*! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought *that which was* torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an

A father is honoured by his son; a master is feared by his servant. If I am the Father of my people, saith the Lord of hosts, where is mine honour? If I am your master, ye priests who despise my name, where is your fear of me? But ye say, How have we despised thy name? Ye pollute mine altar with blemished sacrifices. But ye say, How have we polluted thine altar? Ye have despised it. Ye offer in sacrifice that which is blind, and say: It is no evil! Ye offer that which is lame and sick, and say, It is no evil! Offer such presents to thy governor; and see, saith the Lord of hosts; will he be pleased with thy gift or receive thee graciously? Then said Malachi to the priests, Intreat now the favour of God, that he may be gracious to us. [In vain will ye intreat his favour; for he will say unto you,] Your hands have been guilty of this sin; and shall I accept your persons? saith the Lord of hosts. Oh that one of you would close my temple, that ye may no longer kindle mine altar-fire to no purpose! I have no pleasure in you, neither will I accept your sacrifices. For through all the world from east to west my name shall be magnified among the nations, and in all places I will be worshipped in spirit and in truth: yea, my name shall be magnified among all nations, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye profane my name by saying, The altar of the Lord is a polluted thing, and the flesh of the sacrifices which are offered thereon is contemptible. Moreover ye say, It is a weariness to eat thereof. Thus ye despise mine altar, saith the Lord of hosts, and bring the torn, the

offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord. ¹⁴ But cursed *be* the deceiver, which hath in his flock a male, and voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I *am* a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.

¹ And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. ² If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. ³ Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, *even* the dung of your solemn feasts; and *one* shall take you away with it. ⁴ And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁵ My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him *for* the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. ⁶ The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. ⁷ For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. ⁸ But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁹ Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.

lame, and the sick, and make them your offering. Can I accept them from you? saith the Lord. My curse upon the deceitful worshipper, who, when he hath made a vow unto me, spareth his male sheep and offereth a blemished thing. For my majesty is great, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name greatly to be feared among the nations.

And now, ye priests, hear what the Lord saith unto you. If ye will not hearken to my words, nor lay them to heart, to give unto me the glory which is due unto my name, saith the Lord of hosts, then will I bring upon you the curse which is written in the law of Moses; and that which should have been a blessing unto you shall become a curse; yea, I have made it a curse already, because ye lay not to heart my words. Behold, for your sins I will check the springing of your seed-corn; I will cover your faces with the dung of the beasts that ye sacrifice, and ye shall be swept away with it. Then shall ye know that I sent you this reproof that ye might keep the covenant which I made with the house of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. I made a covenant with them to give them life and peace; I blessed them that they might fear me, and they feared me and revered my name. In those days truth was in the priest's mouth, and wickedness was far from his lips: he walked with me in peace and righteousness, and his counsel often turned transgressors from their sins. For it is my pleasure that the priest should speak with understanding, and that men should seek from him the knowledge of my law, inasmuch as he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But now ye have departed from my ways; ye have made the

¹⁰ Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers? ¹¹ Judah hath dealt treacherously, and an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord which he loved, and hath married the daughter of a strange god. ¹² The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this, the master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob, and him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts. ¹³ And this have ye done again, covering the altar of the Lord with tears, with weeping, and with crying out, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, or receiveth *it* with good will at your hand. ¹⁴ Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because the Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously: yet *is* she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. ¹⁵ And did not he make one? Yet had he the residue of the spirit. And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. ¹⁶ For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away: for *one* covereth violence with his garment, saith the Lord of hosts: therefore take

law a stumbling-block to many; ye have corruptly broken the covenant which I made with the house of Levi, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore have I given you over to contempt, and brought you low in the eyes of all the people, to recompense your departure from my ways and your corrupt administration of my law.

Are we not the children of one father, Jacob, and the creatures of one God, the God of Israel? Why then doth each one of us deal treacherously with his brother, and thus profane the covenant which God made with our fathers? Judah hath dealt treacherously; Israel hath committed an abomination; it hath been done in Jerusalem. The men of Judah have profaned the holiness which the Lord loveth by marrying outlandish and idolatrous women. The Lord will cut off from among the dwellings of Jacob the man that doeth this, and all his household with him, though he present himself with an offering before the Lord of hosts. Ye have turned again to this transgression: and thus ye have surrounded mine altar with the tears, and lamentations, and sighs of your injured wives, so that I no longer regard your offering, nor accept it at your hand. And yet ye ask, Why dost thou reject us? Because the Lord, who was a witness to thy marriage covenant with the wife of thy youth, hath seen that thou hast been false to her, though she is the partner of thy life, the woman with whom thou didst enter into covenant. And did not God at the beginning make man male and female, and make of twain one flesh? And yet by the might of his Spirit he could have made many wives for that one man. And why was

heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously.

¹⁷Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied *him*? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil *is* good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them: or, Where *is* the God of judgment? ¹Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. ²But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he *is* like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's sope: ³and he shall sit *as* a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. ⁴Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. ⁵And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside

this? Because he designed that the children should be a godly seed (1 Cor. vii. 14). Take ye heed therefore to your own spirit, and let none of you break his covenant with the wife of his youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, saith: I hate the man that divorceth his wife, and the man that outrageth his marriage bed, saith the Lord of hosts. Therefore take heed unto yourselves that ye deal not treacherously with your wives.

Ye have wearied the Lord with your complaints against his government. Yet ye say, How have we wearied him? In that ye say, Evil-doers are acceptable unto the Lord, and he delighteth in them: where then is the God of justice and judgment? Therefore, behold, I will send my messenger to prepare my way before me: and the God of justice and judgment for whom ye ask shall come to his temple in an hour when ye look not for him: the Angel of the covenant, the Messiah in whom ye boast, behold, he cometh, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For as the refiner's fire destroyeth dross, as the lye of the fuller destroyeth uncleanness, so shall he consume iniquity. He shall sit as one sitteth to refine and purify silver, and shall purify the worshippers of God, and refine them as gold and silver. Then shall they offer unto the Lord the sacrifices of righteousness, and the worship of Judah and Jerusalem shall be acceptable unto the Lord as in the days of old, as in the ancient times [when Moses served me faithfully in all my house, saith the Lord]. And I myself will

the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. ⁶For I *am* the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

⁷Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? ⁸Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. ⁹Ye *are* cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, *even* this whole nation. ¹⁰Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it*. ¹¹And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. ¹²And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts.

¹³Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so *much* against thee? ¹⁴Ye have

come and pass judgment upon you. And I will be swift to bear witness against sorcerers, adulterers, and false swearers. I will bear witness also against them that oppress their hired servants, or the widow, or the fatherless, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. I am the Lord; and had not my love been unchangeable, ye had long since been consumed, ye sons of Jacob.

Even in the days of your fathers, so soon as I gave you my statutes, ye turned aside and kept them not. But now, return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Yet ye say, What have we to repent of, and wherein shall we return? Is it meet, think ye, that man should rob God? But ye say, How have we robbed thee? Ye have withheld from me my tithes and offerings; therefore the curse that is written in my law is come upon you: for the whole nation hath robbed me. But now pay the whole of your tithes into my treasury, that there may be sacrifices for mine altar, and food for my priests; and prove me therewith, saith the Lord of hosts: see ye if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour down fruitfulness upon the earth, so that ye shall not find room to store the blessing. And I will rebuke for you the mildew and the locusts that they shall not destroy your crops; your vine also shall not fail to bring her fruit to perfection in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. All nations shall count you happy, for ye shall be a land of delight, saith the Lord of hosts.

Ye have spoken rebellious words against me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, How have we rebelled against thee? Ye have

said, It is vain to serve God : and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? ¹⁵ And now we call the proud happy ; yea, they that work wickedness are set up ; yea, *they that tempt God* are even delivered.

¹⁶ Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened and heard *it*, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

¹⁷ And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

¹⁸ Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. ¹ For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven ; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble : and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

² But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. ³ And ye shall tread down the wicked ; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do *this*, saith the Lord of hosts.

said, There is no reward for serving God : we have reaped no profit from keeping his commandments, or from repenting before him in dust and ashes. Therefore we call the proud happy ; for the workers of iniquity prosper, and they that tempt God escape.

It came to pass, when Malachi had thus spoken, that they that feared the Lord spake one with another of all these things ; and the Lord hearkened unto them and heard them, and wrote in his remembrance-book a record of their filial fear, and of their reverence for his name. Moreover the Lord said, They shall be mine, my peculiar treasure, in the day that I am preparing. And I will pity them as a man pitieth an obedient son. Then shall your eyes be opened, and ye shall see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. Behold that day cometh, and it shall burn as a furnace ; all that walk in pride and all that work iniquity shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up root and branch, saith the Lord of hosts. But unto those of you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his beams ; and ye shall go forth into freedom and joy as calves let loose from the stall. And ye shall trample on the wicked who have oppressed you ; for they shall be ashes under your feet in the day that I am preparing, saith the Lord of hosts.

The glorious Christ of God is a Judge as well as a Saviour. His first coming brought salvation to the poor, and destruction to those who said, We will not have this man to reign over us ; his second coming shall in this respect be like unto the

first. The poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake, shall lift up their heads with joy; but the enemies of Christ shall be driven from the glory of his presence into the blackness of darkness for ever.

⁴Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with the statutes and judgments.*

⁵Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: ⁶and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

[I shall not again speak to you for many days, saith the Lord: but] remember ye the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and judgments which I gave unto him in Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you one like unto Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of my judgment come. He shall turn your hearts to repentance, the fathers with the children, and the children with the fathers, lest at my coming I smite the land with a curse.

What God spake by the mouth of all his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, he hath in great measure fulfilled; and this fulfilment of much is the certain pledge and proof of the fulfilment of all, according to the Redeemer's saying, Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. May he make the word of prophecy to be unto us, as unto Peter and those to whom he wrote, a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts.

Whatever be our mistakes and failures in our endeavour to expound to unlearned readers a difficult and neglected portion of God's Word, that endeavour has had its root in genuine reverence for the Holy Bible, and unfeigned love to the truths which it reveals. To that book, which in language of unrivalled simplicity and grandeur tells of the origin and end of all things, of the work of the Creator and the government of the Most High, of the sin of man and the salvation of God, of the ultimate downfall of the mystic Babylon and the final triumph of the Church of Christ, of new heavens and

a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness,—to that book we here render a tribute of loving allegiance borrowed, as to its poetic form, from Tennyson's *Lines to Roman Virgil* :

Holy Bible, thou that tellest
Of the sky's blue arches wrapped in fire ;
Babel falling, Zion rising
Fresh and young from nature's funeral pyre :

Thou that tell'st how night and chaos
Fled, when light its Author's bidding heard ;
All the mystery of creation
Often shrouding in a lonely word :

Lordlier in thy lowly language
Than the epics which the nations praise ;
Treasures of unearthly wisdom
Flashing forth from many a mystic phrase :

Record of the life unfallen,
Sinless Adam tending Eden's bowers ;
Record of the great transgression,
Woful ending of those golden hours :

Charter of the future, glorying
In the righteousness again to be ;
Heaven and earth anew created,
Saints triumphant on the glassy sea :

Thou that seest nature's Maker
Riding on the wings of nature's wind ;
Thou majestic in thy gladness
At the love of God to humankind :

Only light of all the ages,
Star of dawn to earth's benighted shore ;
Radiance of the eternal morning
Whose exhaustless Sun shall set no more :

I believe thee, Holy Bible ;
I have loved thee since my day began,
Herald of the sweetest tidings
Ever welcomed by the soul of man.

School of Urban Missions, Oakland



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